THE

VID KID'S

BOOK OF HOME VIDEO GAMES

80 TOP VIDEO GAMES

XPERT'S GUIDE TO SELECTING

AMES AND GAME SYSTEMS

Rawson Stovall

The VID Kid's Book of Home Video Games

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RAWSON STOVALL

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SPECIAL THANKS TO . . .

MY FAMILY, composed of: A galaxy of many different elements, a comet traveling anywhere and everywhere, an emergency booster engine, an asteroid, and a waiting rocket ship; in a Group like this, nothing can work without the other . . .

MY DAD, a galaxy composed of many different elements—stars, planets, comets, and dust, yet the best part lies in the center—The Spirit of Life and Love,

MY MOM, an emergency booster engine helping aim the rocket during troubled times,

MY SISTER, a comet traveling anywhere and everywhere it dares to go,

MY DOG, an asteroid, so innocent yet so guilty of everything it does,

FROM

ME, a rocket ship waiting to soar into the unknown regions of the

UNIVERSE!

Rawson Stovall

Acknowledgments

My deepest gratitude to the people who believed in me, . . . to my fourth and fifth grade teachers, Mrs. Geri Davis, Mrs. Bettie Holden, Mrs. Nancy Eppler, and Mrs. Kathy Aldridge, . . . to businessman Mr. Jack Williams, . . . and to Mr. Dick Tarpley and Mr. John Rice of the Abilene *Reporter News.*

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Introduction

This book reviews over eighty games and six systems used in playing the games. It is a guide for the person who owns a system and wants information about games for that system, for the person who doesn't have a system but is considering buying one, and for the person who has a system and is interested in purchasing a different one. This book does not contain reviews of any game, system, or accessory that I do not have in my home. What I write about is always from hands-on experience.

My experience in playing games began early in life. For as long as I can remember, I've been playing and enjoying games. I started by playing the board game Sorry with my parents when I was three years old. I then went on to play all kinds of other games. Two of my favorites are Tri Aminos and Monopoly. I'll play any game I can get anyone to play with me. Games are in my blood. The first video coin-op game I played was Pong. From there I went on to Space Invaders, Sea Wolf, Pac-Man, and then to my own home game system. But, as I remember it, I had a little trouble getting my first system.

After playing an Atari VCS in a local department store, I asked my dad to get me one, and he said, "Aww, that's just a waste of money!" Boy, was I discouraged. I appealed to my last hope—Santa Claus. That was the Christmas of 1980, the year I was in the third grade. That year my next-door neighbors got one, and I didn't! I was told that Santa must have

gotten our houses mixed up. Needless to say, I spent much of my time over at my neighbors', playing.

My birthday came and went and still nothing! More and more of my friends received game systems, and still I was left out. In the fall of 1981, when I was in the fourth grade, I told my dad I didn't think I could depend on Santa and I wanted to make some money to buy an Atari. I really wasn't sure what he'd say, because every time I told him I wanted one, he'd tell me it was a waste of money. I was hoping, of course, he'd say to wait for Christmas, but all he said was "Well, if that's what you want to do, go ahead!"

I started by raking leaves for my parents and neighbors, but I quickly figured I'd have to rake billions of leaves to reach my goal. Fortunately, it was a good year for pecans, and I began picking them up while raking leaves that had fallen from the three pecan trees in our backyard. I thought there might be a market for them with Thanksgiving and pecan pie time approaching. I suggested this idea to my parents, and they agreed and pitched in and helped. My little sister even helped by gathering the pecans, and my dad, mom, and I took turns cracking them. We all just about ruined our fingers shelling them into halves. After many a callus, I took orders for the pecans at school, sold them door-to-door, and made enough money to buy my Atari VCS.

Well, who knows, maybe I could have depended upon Santa, because he did come through with some game cartridges! Those first games gave me the start I needed. I played them until I knew them backward and forward and then loaned them to friends, who in exchange loaned me some of their games.

After Christmas vacation, my fourth grade reading teacher, Mrs. Geri Davis, announced a class project. We were told to get into groups and choose topics for a weekly mock TV show to be presented to the class. Two of my friends and I elected to do a show on video games. We bought just about every magazine and book we could find on the subject of home and coin-op games. For each show we reviewed around three games, told of the games to be re-

leased, and had quiz contests. We also invited guest speakers such as Mr. Jack Williams, owner of the Abilene Video Library, a retail video store where I got much of my information, and Mr. Max Martin, manager of the local Chuck E. Cheese Pizza Time Theatre. Mr. Martin caused quite a stir at school when he brought all of the Pizza Time characters with him.

I didn't realize it at the time, but reading all the books and magazines about the games gave me a tremendous amount of information that was going to help me when I started writing my newspaper column. Also, talking with adults gave me valuable experience that I would use later on in interviewing game designers.

For the rest of the school year I was really happy. That weekly mock TV show was loads of fun, not just for me, but for fifth and even sixth graders who came to see our show. During that time I rented games from the Abilene Video Library and could hardly wait to talk with Mr. Williams about all the latest information from the world of video games—new games being released and new companies starting up, such as Apollo and Imagic.

All during this time a friend and I had several ideas for games that we thought could be marketed. But we soon discovered that companies were not interested in game ideas, but in games that were already programmed. For that we needed a computer and programming skills.

At the beginning of summer, I was down in the dumps. I know that sounds crazy with three months of vacation ahead of me, but I really enjoyed sharing my information about video games at school, and when summer came I missed all that fun. So I decided to turn my attention to getting a computer, but making enough money to buy one seemed almost impossible. It wasn't even pecan season!

Along about then, I was in my favorite store telling Mr. Williams the latest information I had learned about the new video games. He suggested that I write an article because I knew so much about them. On the way home my mom, who knew that I had been trying to figure out a way to make

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many good games haven't made it either because of space limitations. Keep in mind also that not all games were released at the same time, and it would be unfair to compare games released several years ago with the latest games because of advances in technology.

There are some reviews of games by companies no longer in the business. The video game industry is fast-changing and is very competitive, and some companies just couldn't find a place in the market. Nevertheless, if you read a review of a game you'd like to buy and can't find it in a store, there are mail-order companies that specialize in stocking games, new and used. Look in current video game magazines for their advertisements. Don't be afraid to buy used games. The beautiful thing about video games is that they are practically indestructible. I've never had one thing happen to any of my cartridges. I've heard that dust is bad for them, and for that reason I've kept mine in the boxes they come in or in vinyl storage boxes.

There are more reviews of games for the Atari 2600 than for any other system because that was the only system I owned when I started writing my column for my hometown paper, the Abilene *Reporter News,* in July 1982. Since then I've gradually added the other systems. But the Atari 2600 was and still is the most popular and bestselling game system on the market. There are other systems on the market and, before buying one, you should sample them all. I hope this book will give you a taste of what's available.

I hope this book will also show the positive aspects of video games. Morton Dean, of CBS *Morning News,* asked me "Are video games good for kids?" I'd like to ask "What's so bad about them?" Everyone probably has heard how video games can improve reflexes and hand-eye coordination, but they also teach patience. In many games the only way to get good is to use the trial and error method, which requires a great deal of patience! Video games also give kids and grown-ups a chance to act out their dreams, be it as a deep-jungle explorer, a jet-fighter pilot, or a dragon slayer. They are, in my opinion, much better than television because

video games allow the player to interact with the screen. The player analyzes the situation, considers all the possible responses, chooses one, and solves the problem. It doesn't matter if it is an attack from alien invaders or an educational math game—the basic idea is the same.

Speaking of educational games, more and more companies are now making them. Atari, in cooperation with Children's Computer Workshop, has released some of the best educational ones I've seen for the Atari 2600. For example, one of the games, Cookie Monster Munch, teaches the directions (right and left), numbers, and counting. For play on Mattel's Intellivision are Imagic's Truckin', which teaches map skills, and Microsurgeon, which teaches anatomy. Activision's Plaque Attack and Johnson and Johnson's Tooth Protectors can be considered lessons in dental hygiene.

Most strategy/adventure games come with long, detailed instructions which, for sure, encourage reading skills. Some of Activision's instructions have bits of extra information—the sort of facts one might find in an encyclopedia. For example, in the game Frostbite there is "Life at the Top of the World," a short description of Eskimo life in the Arctic. It ends with a library commercial: "There are fascinating things to learn from our Arctic sisters and brothers. Find out more at your library." In Activision's thirty-one page instructions for Space Shuttle—A Journey into Space for the Atari 2600, there are nineteen space flight terms with definitions and a diagram of a space shuttle.

Finally, I hope this book will show that video games are not a fad—they're a part of the American scene and represent wholesome family fun. If you've never played with home video games, perhaps because you're confused by the many systems out there, I hope this book will help start you on a fun activity.

If you are deciding whether to buy a home game system or a computer which also plays games, I'd recommend buying a home game system first, especially if you have a family. Playing games on computers is becoming popular, and that's what I'm gradually getting into myself, but unless you can

afford two computers, it would be best for a family to have a game system for playing the games and a computer for family business matters. One member of the family (like maybe Mom or Dad) may monopolize the computer with bookkeeping so much that the kids won't have a chance to use it for anything else.

I've had a lot of fun choosing material and preparing it for this book. I'm always amazed at the interesting developments in the home video game business. It's a bright, exciting world you can share in your own home with the most important people in your world . . . your family and friends!

GAMES

Games,
Games,
Games.

Board games,
Chance games,
Very hard skill games,
Tiny-size hand games . . .
These are just a few.

Short games,
Hard games,
Fast-action sports games,
Top-selling cube games . . .
Oh yes, maze games, too.

Race games,
Dice games,
New computer games,
Don't forget card games . . .

Last of all,
Best of all,
I like VIDEO GAMES!

The VID Kid's Book of Home Video Games

PART I

Reviews

1

The Atari 2600: Oldie but Goodie

Of all the systems on the market, the Atari VCS, or 2600, as it is now called, is one of the oldest and the most popular. There have been more cartridges and accessories (joysticks, storage boxes, and so forth) made for it than for any other system. Games are produced for it by Atari and even by Atari's competition, like Mattel and Coleco. Activision was the first software company to produce games for the Atari 2600. Since then, dozens of companies, some of which have come and gone, have produced games for it. In fact, these companies as a whole manufactured more games for it than possibly could have been purchased by consumers. Even though it's the antique of the systems, I don't think consumers need worry that if they buy one, they'll see games for it disappear overnight. The system is already in too many homes for that to happen.

The only problem I've had with my system is the joystick. Before getting a WICO joystick, I had each of my Atari

joysticks repaired and replaced at least once. But at least they are the plug-in type and can be replaced with joysticks from other companies. All kinds of joysticks are available for it. I haven't tried them all, but my favorite is the WICO Command Control. The player makes his choice of using the fire button on top of the stick or on the base of the unit.

Another disadvantage of the system is its limited capability—it just doesn't have the capability of the latest machines, like the ColecoVision and the Atari 5200. A game designed for it can't be as good as one designed for the 5200; or I should say, a game for these advanced systems should have much better graphics, sound, and game play than one for the 2600. Still, the 2600 can display high quality. Proof is that I've seen and played many games for the 2600 with unbelievably beautiful graphics and great game play. Poor-quality games that I've seen for the 2600, I would say, are not the fault of the system, but of designers and manufacturers who were in a rush to get a game on the market.

One version of the Atari 2600 is Coleco's Gemini System. It is more compact (and takes up less room in a suitcase). I am currently using it to play Atari 2600 compatible games and have found it plays as well as the Atari. My advice to the consumer who is considering purchasing an Atari 2600 is to try out the Gemini as well, and if he likes them both equally, buy the less expensive.

The biggest advantage of the Atari 2600 is the diversity and number of games available. I would rate it the best all-round system for people of all ages. It's not too complicated for a small child, and adults can have loads of fun with it as well.

DRAGONFIRE™/by Imagic

The game Dragonfire, designed by Bob Smith, has something so imaginative, so unique, that no other game for the Atari VCS has it—a fairy-tale theme! According to the tale,

dragons have chased the royal family from their home (the castle) and their belongings (precious treasures). "O we are lost, lost!" laments the King. "Without our vast treasures we cannot raise an army against these accursed dragons. Our Kingdom must not languish under lizards!"

With all that fuss, someone has to do something, so the Prince babbles out, "Nay, not so, my liege! None knows that castle, those many bridges and storerooms, better than I. Give me leave and I shall loot those lizards of their plunder and restore my lord to his birthright."

"Brave boy," says the King, fully pleased. "But," he warns, "beware dread dragonfire!"

The Prince starts out with seven lives on a bridge over a moat that leads to a storeroom full of treasures. Once inside the storeroom, the Prince can pick up treasures like crowns, diamonds, goblets, harps, and other goodies. But the words "beware dread dragonfire" are correct. While on the bridge, the Prince must dodge dragonfire (fireballs) tossed by the dragons. The Prince can duck under high ones and leap over low ones—not an easy chore!

Once he's in the storeroom, he can gather up the treasures for points, but watch out—in this room there is a dragon! If the dragon's fire should touch him, it's bye-bye Prince.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	B
Type	Action/Adventure
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Hard to Very Hard
Overall Rating	A–

ENDURO™/by Activision

Enduro is a combination of the outstanding graphics of Coleco's Turbo and the super sounds of Atari's Night Driver. In Enduro, the player controls a racing car (a supercharged roadster) competing against two hundred other cars in a twenty-four-hour race. The event begins at sunrise on a wide open road, twisting across a green field of grass. On the horizon are rugged mountains. This scenery appears on the top three quarters of the screen.

On the lower quarter of the screen is a scrolling odometer that racks up the miles endured (the player's score) and a gauge that counts the number of cars passed. In the first twenty-four hours, two hundred cars must be passed to reach the next day's race. In Day 2 and every day thereafter, three hundred cars must be passed.

After the promising blue of morning comes the bright sun, which lightens up the sky as it rises. But soon the roadster hits snow. The slick snowpack causes the driver to have a slight loss of control. I've been told it really feels as if you're driving on ice. This snowpack lasts for most of the day. When it finally melts, the sun sets behind the mountains—ah, what a gorgeous view!

After the sun has set, the only vision the player has of the other cars is their taillights. Soon, during the wee hours of the morning, heavy fog sets in. The fog cuts visibility to almost zero; however, it's soon gone, and the sun rises over the horizon. If the required number of cars has been passed, then the player will enter the next day's race.

Enduro looks more like a game that would be played on the ColecoVision or the Atari Super System (5200), yet it's for the Atari 2600. Enduro is more than a graphically pretty game—designer Larry Miller did an outstanding job capturing the thrill of being a racer.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	C
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Driving
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B+

ENTOMBED™/by U.S. Games

The story line behind U.S. Games' Entombed starts like this: "The famous archaeologist, Sir Harold Pippingsly, has just discovered the long-lost Phantom's Tomb and has entered the dark, eerie corridors, which are now the 'catacombs of the zombies.' " Personally, I would never go inside dark, eerie corridors with or without a flashlight, but Sir Harold Pippingsly and his two team members (the players) are brave men.

Dark, eerie catacombs can give anyone goose bumps, even Sir Harold Pippingsly. That's probably a big enough reason why he should hurry through this amazing maze, which moves from the bottom toward the top of the screen. But there are other dangers, such as running into a dead end, running into a dreaded zombie, or just not running fast enough and getting "scrolled" off the top of the screen. Any of these three things can cost Sir Harold Pippingsly his life.

Not all is bad in this Phantom's Tomb. "Make-breaks" are helpful things to possess. If the player has a "make-break," then, when he gets into a tight spot, he can break through the wall that's trapping him. Each "make-break" contains three "break-throughs," and there is no limit to the number

of "make-breaks" the player can obtain. The player should try to grab as many as he can—he'll need them near the end!

A most unusual thing about Entombed is the scoring. The player gets one point for every part of the tomb completed. There are five parts to a maze, and at least five different mazes, all colored differently.

After sweaty palms and a tired wrist, I managed to get a score of 36. Now 36 may not sound like a very good score, but believe me, it is! After the third tomb, the maze starts moving like crazy! It's a hard task to move fast enough so that I won't be "scrolled" off the screen, but I also have to avoid getting into dead ends or coming in contact with a zombie.

According to the instruction booklet, in harder tombs (mazes), the player must also watch out for changing mazes. If he doesn't and gets trapped inside a wall, he will become —entombed!

Although it can be played by just one person, Entombed is a game that is really fun for two people to play. The two-player version is hot and furious competition—whoever survives the longer wins the game!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	C
Sound	C
Type	Maze
Age Level	12 and up
Difficulty Level	Hard to Very Hard
Overall Rating	C+

FAST FOOD™/by Telesys

Warning! Whoever is on a diet, do not read further!

How would you like to eat as many cheeseburgers, pizza slices, french fries, ice creams, milk shakes, hamburgers, hot dogs, and soda pops as your stomach can hold? In the game Fast Food by Telesys, that's the object—eat, eat, eat!!!

The player is Mr. Mouth, who catches all kinds of junk food flying by at "sub-gastronomical" speeds. Calories—not points—are scored in this game! The more calories Mr. Mouth consumes, the faster the food flies! Mr. Mouth's task is not easy. Purple pickles fly across the screen, and if he eats six of them, he burps, and because of his rudeness, the snack bar closes.

The game play itself is much like Activision's Kaboom!, except that in Fast Food the objects fly horizontally instead of vertically. After each wave of food, the sign "You're getting fatter!" appears. When the player eats six purple pickles, the sign "Burp" appears, followed by the "Closed" sign of the snack bar.

The graphics in Fast Food are really good! French fries look like french fries and everything else looks edible, except for the colas and pizza slices, which do not look all that real.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	C
Type	Action
Age Level	12 and up

Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B

FATHOM™/by Imagic

I've played many adventure games, and I've seen many duds fail and many hits succeed. I've also predicted many winners, such as Activision's Pitfall, Imagic's Dragonfire, Mattel's Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, and Odyssey's Quest for the Rings.

To be a good player of an adventure game there are several musts. *Patience.* You need it if you're going to play these games, because the only way to get good is to use the trial and error method. *Reflexes.* In some adventure games, the only way to survive is to have great hand-eye coordination, or reflexes.

There are several qualities of any outstanding adventure game. *Game play.* To be outstanding a game of this type has to have different scenes, enemies, traps, and objectives. *Good graphics.* This is a feature that many adventure games don't have; however, those that do always seem to stand out from the crowd.

Imagic's Fathom, designed by Rob "Demon Attack" Fulop for play on the Atari 2600, has each of these qualities. In fact, Imagic has come up with a game that seems to exceed the capabilities of the Atari 2600. I mean, would you believe that on the fifth level there are around one hundred different rooms?! Now, all you have to have besides the game and the system are patience and good reflexes.

In Fathom the evil Titans have kidnapped Neptina (a mermaid), who is Neptune's daughter! They've stuck her inside a cage and have dropped it onto the floor of the deepest trench in the oceans. As if that wasn't enough, they've broken Neptune's magical Trident (the only thing that can open up the cage) and have scattered its three pieces deep in the ocean and high in the atmosphere.

Proteus, a guy who can turn into a dolphin or seagull and who is a member of Neptune's Court, decides to find the pieces of the Trident to free Neptina and bring freedom across the world. After each time he saves her, the Titans capture her again, break the Trident, add more sea, air, and land (more screens), and scatter the three pieces of the Trident. With more land to cover, saving Neptina each time becomes very difficult.

Proteus loses his chance to save Neptina (game over) when his energy/point level reaches zero. The level decreases each time he touches octopusses, seaweed, blackbirds, gray clouds, and fireballs from volcanoes. The level increases each time Proteus touches a sea horse or pink cloud.

According to the instruction booklet, when the player saves the mermaid seven times, he should watch for a surprise. I've saved her only five times—and that required most of my patience!!! If you save her seven times, please let me know what the surprise is, because my patience has run out. Despite my limited patience, I predict Fathom will be a hit.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	A
Graphics	A+
Sound	A
Type	Adventure
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Very Hard/Takes Patience
Overall Rating	A+

JAWBREAKER™/by Tigervision

For those of us with a sweet tooth, there is a game on that theme—Jawbreaker by Tigervision. The story line starts out like this—"You're loose in a candy factory!"—and ends like this—"Tigervision, fun at its sweetest." The game is a maze filled with candy bars, and the player, using a pair of jaws, with two in reserve, must eat all of the candy bars. The player chomps around the maze by entering sliding doors and eating candy bars—what a "treat." Here's the "trick"—four smiling faces, each one a different color, chase the jaws. However, the pair of jaws can eat the jawbreakers if the jaws eat a power wafer located in the center of the maze. The wafer causes the jawbreakers to turn red, meaning the jaws now have enough power to eat them.

The jawbreakers, however, are tricky. When the player thinks one is headed one way, "Bam!" it's headed the other way. If one of the jawbreakers catches the pair of jaws, the jaws' teeth rot out, causing the player to lose one of his three pairs. Sound like Pac-Man? It is but it isn't. Jawbreakers is much more difficult.

In each frame there are 135 candy bars, worth 10 points each. Therefore, when all of the candy bars have been eaten, the player should have 1,350 points. Each jawbreaker the pair of jaws eats is worth 200 points, and successfully clearing a frame gives the player a bonus of 500 points.

After each frame is cleared, a "cute" thing happens, but I'm not going to spoil the fun for people who haven't played it yet—I'm going to let them find out for themselves.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	B
Type	Action/Maze
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

JOURNEY ESCAPE™/by Data Age

This rock 'n' roll video game is entitled Journey Escape after the rock group Journey's multimillion-selling album of the same name. In the game the player helps all five Journey band members—Steve Smith, Jonathan Cain, Ross Valory, Neal Schon, and Steve Perry—through crowds of pesky characters and backstage obstacles in order to reach their Scarab Escape Vehicle in time.

At the start of the game, the player takes the role of one of the five band members and has both $50,000 in cash (concert money) and sixty seconds to reach the escape vehicle. Each time the player gets stopped by a pesky character—love-crazed groupies, shifty-eyed promoters, and sneaky photographers—he will lose time and money. A backstage obstacle (stage barrier) won't cost the player any money, but it does take away precious time.

Not all the characters in this game are a nuisance. Loyal Roadies cause the player to be invulnerable in the crowd for a very short time, but when things are really looking bad, the Mighty Manager might allow a free ride to the Scarab Escape Vehicle and an extra $9,900! That is, if you can catch him. The Mighty Manager appears very seldom.

Once all five band members are safely in the vehicle, the game has an intermission. The tune from the hit song "Don't

Stop Believing" will play while the Scarab Escape Vehicle makes its escape.

The graphics in Journey Escape are clever. For example, the love-crazed groupies are symbolized as red hearts mounted on legs, and the sneaky photographers are flashing light bulbs.

One thing that I haven't seen before in a video game that Journey Escape has is the ability to change the background of the game. By depressing the "Black and White" switch on the game console, the player sees a plain background whereas, in the "Color" position, the background is a kaleidoscope of strobing stage lights. In the "Black and White" position on a color TV set the background is still in color, but easier on the eyes.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	B
Sound	B
Type	Action
Age Level	12 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B

MEGAMANIA™/by Activision

MegaMania, designed by Steve Cartwright, is *super* crazy! Steve asks, "What have I turned loose on an unsuspecting world?" MegaMania is a Space Invaders type game where the player is flying through space and is attacked by waves of very vicious, bizarre objects. Many of them resemble familiar objects on earth—such as hamburgers, radial tires, dice, Tinkertoys, bow ties, and Swiss cheese. Sound simple? Well,

it's not! You have an energy bar that shows your energy level, which is always decreasing. You can't just dodge and hope they'll go away, because unless you shoot them all, you're just losing energy. There are eight waves of attackers, and they move faster in each successive round.

Normally, when reviewing a game, I would tell about the good parts and the bad parts, but to me MegaMania is the most fun-filled, action-packed, challenging video game cartridge I have ever played. No lie!

What makes this game more challenging than, say, Space Invaders by Atari, Space Chase by Apollo, or Demon Attack by Imagic is the way these objects move. Each invasion has a distinct movement. Some move left to right across the screen, while others make alternating back and forth movements as they descend down the screen. Swiss cheese falls like raining hail, straight down! Some objects have a pulsating movement.

The secret to MegaMania is learning the movements and timing your laser fire and escape. After much practice, my high score is over 300,000 points, witnessed by seven of my friends. I also took pictures of my score.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	C
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Space Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Extremely Hard
Overall Rating	B+

MS. PAC-MAN™/by Atari

Being a boy, I hate to admit that Atari's home version of Ms. Pac-Man for the VCS is better than Pac-Man, but, in my opinion, this is one time the female is far superior to the male!

In Pac-Man the graphics aren't anything like the arcade game. There are large dashes instead of dots, the maze is completely different, and the only bonus is a square-shaped multivitamin, which means no fruits or keys. Also, Pac-Man himself looks tired and beat up—he's more square-shaped than round.

In Ms. Pac-Man, however, the lady looks true to form. There are three different mazes, and each one looks almost exactly like the original arcade game. Although there are also dashes instead of dots, the dashes are not as large and noticeable as in Pac-Man.

The bonuses in Ms. Pac-Man are exactly the same as in the arcade game. First comes the cherry, then the strawberry, followed by the orange, pretzel, apple, pear, and banana. After that the fruits will appear at random.

The sounds in Pac-Man are hardly worth mentioning and are even boring, but the designers at Atari sure did a great job in capturing the arcade tune and bringing it home with Ms. Pac-Man.

The difficulty levels in Ms. Pac-Man are just right, making it a game that people of all ages and expertise will enjoy. The player has a choice of playing with one, two, three, or four monsters.

In Pac-Man there are too many unnecessary game variations, and even though the player has a choice of setting the game at an easier level, it just isn't the same as in Ms. Pac-Man.

For instance, my five-year-old sister, even though she loves to play Pac-Man would often get discouraged, even

when it was set at the easiest level. But in Ms. Pac-Man she can set it at one monster and have a happier time playing the game.

Also, I've noticed that many adults prefer to set the level at two or three monsters. Being able to set the game at the number of monsters preferred helps in tournaments, where often one player is better than the others.

Clearly, Ms. Pac-Man is a better game, but in all fairness to her sidekick, if there had never been an arcade game to compare it with, and if Ms. Pac-Man had not come along, Pac-Man would have been a great home game. Regardless of whether or not you like or dislike the home Pac-Man, you'll fall in love with Ms. Pac-Man.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Maze
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

PAC-MAN™/by Atari

Disappointment may be in store for the person who buys the cartridge for his Atari thinking it will be like the arcade Pac-Man game. There are dashes instead of dots, and power pills instead of energy capsules. There is also a square-shaped multivitamin appearing on every screen, which means no fruits or keys. The music at the beginning has also changed completely, and there is an annoying sound while Pac-Man travels his way through the maze.

The game's instruction booklet states that the object of the game is to keep Pac-Man as healthy as possible by eating Video Wafers (the dashes), power pills, and multivitamins, but Pac-Man himself doesn't look healthy at all, even after eating a multivitamin—much less twenty-five multivitamins. The problem is he's more square-looking than roundish, and he doesn't speed around the corners in the maze anymore.

Inky, Blinky, Pinky, and Clyde, the monsters, have also changed. They're not different colors, like in the coin-op game, and a person can't tell by their eyes where they're headed. They blink too much, and it's difficult to tell when they've changed colors. (The monsters change colors when they become ghosts.) Sometimes it's even hard to see them.

All this doesn't mean that Pac-Man home-style version isn't fun and challenging, because despite these drawbacks it still is a good game. It's just not Pac-Man like the arcade game.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	C
Closeness to Arcade	D
Graphics	C
Sound	C
Type	Maze
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	C–

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK™/by Atari

"Snakes! Why did there have to be snakes?" are the words of the hero, Indiana Jones. And snakes there are—lots of them! By now you've probably guessed that I'm reviewing

the movie-to-game adaptation of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* by Atari.

The player, Indiana Jones (Indy to his friends), has been hired by his government to find the Ark of the Covenant before his enemies do. The player controls Indy's movement by using both joysticks—one to make Indy move, and the other one to control the objects that he's holding (up to a maximum of six).

The Ark of the Covenant is a treasure that is covered by a sheet of shining gold and was used by ancient Hebrews to carry the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. According to the Bible and the movie, the Ark now possesses the power to destroy completely the enemy of the army that has possession of it.

In 980 B.C., the Ark of the Covenant was hidden inside a chamber called the Well of the Souls. However, no one knows the location of the Well of the Souls. But there is one single way to learn the location, and that is to go to the secret Map Room in the city of Tanis. If at the right time of the day you're holding the right object, the location will be revealed. However, finding the Map Room is not so easy, because the city of Tanis was buried during a terrible sandstorm that lasted over a year.

The game Raiders of the Lost Ark is very similar to the movie. The player, using both joysticks, guides Indy through thirteen different scenes. But in no way is this easy to do. Here's why. The player starts the game inside the Well of the Souls, with Indy standing on top of a high pedestal with the Lost Ark right above him. Suddenly the pedestal sinks, the Ark disappears, and the player's search begins.

The Entrance Room is the first room the player will travel through in his quest for the Ark. The player starts out with only a big bag of gold, but in the Entrance Room there is a large rock, a whip, and a snake—"Snakes! Why did there have to be snakes? . . ."

The Market Place is the second scene the player will travel through. It is the center of activity in Egypt. Here the player will find three baskets, each containing a certain ob-

ject or a certain number of objects. In the Market Place, there are two peddlers—one who sells magic flutes and one who sells parachutes. The player has only one bag of gold, so he can only buy one object—a magic flute, used to charm snakes, or a parachute, used to avoid death when falling off a mesa. Also, the peddler selling the magic flutes will take you to the second Market Place—that is, for the right price.

Somewhere in the first Market Place is a grenade. If the player picks it up, takes it to a certain place in the Entrance Room, lets it go, and gets out of the room so the explosion won't kill Indy, then there will be a hole in the wall that leads into the Temple of the Ancients.

Inside the Temple of the Ancients is the Spider Room, the Treasure Room, and the Room of the Shining Light. If the player picks up the right objects and uses them at the right time, he will magically appear in the Map Room.

In the Map Room, if the player is holding the right object at the right time, the location of the Ark on a mesa will be revealed. The player must then find the correct mesa and dig with a shovel he has purchased at the second Market Place.

What happens next? If all goes well, then . . . well, I can't tell you. After six hours of solid play, I never made it that far. I'd rate Raiders of the Lost Ark, on a scale of one to ten, an eight for overall graphics, game play, sound, and appeal. Also, the game isn't easy; therefore, I'd say it's a game for ten-year-olds through adults who like mental challenges in adventure-type games.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	B
Graphics	B
Sound	A–
Type	Strategy/Adventure
Age Level	10 and up

Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

RIVER RAID™/by Activision

In River Raid by Activision the player's mission is to destroy enemy bridges, fuel depots, tankers, helicopters, and jets along The River of No Return. It's a name that would give almost anyone the shivers, and so far I haven't survived a mission.

The player starts out with three jet fighters in reserve and a full tank of fuel. Each time the player scores 10,000 points, he is given an additional jet. The most jets a player may have at any time is nine. The most I have ever had is four.

The point value is 30 points for a tanker; 60, helicopter; 80, fuel depot; 100, jet; and 500, bridge. The jets are the hardest to hit because they go so fast. If the player's jet hits a bridge, a canyon wall, or any tanker, helicopter, or jet, his jet is destroyed.

The player's jet has a limited amount of fuel, and he must fly over a depot to refuel his plane. At the bottom of the screen is a fuel gauge, which shows when it's time to start looking for a depot. The player may refuel his jet and at the same time, by depressing the fire button, destroy the fuel depot, thereby scoring 80 points. Most of the time that's what I try to do because it gives me the most points and still gives me fuel.

The player can control the movement of his plane by moving the joystick to the right to bank right, left to bank left, forward to accelerate, and down to slow the jet. With my WICO joystick I use the fire button on top, and with one hand I can move the plane and fire. I usually hold the stick down, moving my jet along as slowly as I can, and I speed up only to avoid hitting an object like a fast-moving jet.

What's exciting about this game are the graphics. The River of No Return runs vertically on the screen through a

canyon—sometimes it's narrow, sometimes it's wide, and sometimes it splits, giving the player only a few seconds to make a decision as to which narrow channel to choose. I like the game because I always want to find out what's in store for me. Each section of the river is bounded by bridges, and so far each section I've encountered is different. My top score is 54,230—a long way from 999,999!

There is a game club for River Raid players called "River Raiders," and you have to score 15,000 points to become a member. River Raid is Carol Shaw's first game for Activision, and I can hardly wait for her second one.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	C
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

ROBOT TANK™/by Activision

The year is 2019. Computerized robot tanks that are a part of the United States defense system have broken contact with Army computer central, and they are out of control across the Southwestern U.S.A., not far from Los Angeles!

No, that's not a sequel to the movie *Wargames,* but it is the story line behind Activision's Robot Tank, designed by Alan Miller.

Robot Tank is a mix between Atari's coin-op game Battlezone and one of Activision's other games, Starmaster, also

designed by Alan Miller. The game is somewhat like Battlezone in that the player is "inside" the tank looking out through his sights, but the game play is more like Starmaster.

When the player's tank gets hit by the robot tanks' fire, the tank doesn't just blow up as in other games, but one of the tank's instruments becomes damaged. On the bottom of the screen are four squares, each having one of the letters R, V, T, or C on it. Each letter stands for a particular instrument on the player's tank (R, radar; V, video screen; T, tires; C, cannon). When an instrument is damaged, the square that stands for it will flash. The tank is destroyed when the cannon is damaged too severely.

Weather is also a factor. The weather changes randomly from day to day. The player will go through whole days of fog, rain, snow, or sunshine.

As if that wasn't realistic enough, Alan Miller programmed the screen to fuzz when the player's tank has been destroyed. It looks just like when someone rips out the cable while the TV set is on. The first time I saw it, I thought something was wrong with our television!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	C
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	First Person, Combat
Age Level	8 and Above
Difficulty Level	Hard
Overall Rating	B+

SEAQUEST™/by Activision

Deep below the calm surface of the Atlantic, deep-sea divers are returning to their surfaced submarine from the ruins of a ship wreck. In their bags are gold ingots and other treasures.

The catch in this story is that the deep-sea divers have been down in the water too long and must be rescued. The player dives down in his armed submarine, only to find schools of sharks, fleets of pirate subs, and lots of deep-sea divers in trouble. That's the story line behind one of Activision's latest games—Seaquest, designed by Steve Cartwright.

The object of the game is to collect as much of the treasure as possible by retrieving the life-endangered divers before their oxygen supply runs out, all the while blasting killer sharks and enemy subs.

The player starts the game with three submarines and an oxygen supply for each. The supply of oxygen is shown at the bottom of the screen by a white bar. The player must pick up six divers who are in trouble and bring them to the surface for fast bonus points and a new tank full of air. If the player comes in contact with killer sharks, enemy subs, or their torpedoes, then "bazaaang!"

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	C
Graphics	A
Sound	B
Type	Action
Age Level	All Ages

Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B

SPACE SHUTTLE—A JOURNEY INTO SPACE™/ by Activision

Space Shuttle—A Journey into Space was designed by Steve Kitchen with the help and cooperation of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). The player is the Commander of the 101st shuttle mission of the Space Transportation System. The Commander's mission at the helm of the Space Shuttle *Discovery* is to launch, rendezvous, and dock with a satellite as many times as possible, using as little fuel as possible, and then to return safely to earth.

Space Shuttle—A Journey into Space comes with a thirty-one-page *Flight Manual* (instruction booklet), a card with a summary of the six maneuvers—launching, stabilizing orbit, docking, deorbit burning, and effecting reentry and final approach—and a flight deck console overlay. The overlay matches the switches on your game system. For example, the overlay will show you that the left difficulty switch controls backup engines and that the right one controls cargo doors/landing gear.

Now, pretend you're the Commander. No one should begin any mission without being prepared. There's no way I think you can be fully prepared for this one unless you happen to be Richard Truly, commander of several space shuttle flights, including the eighth. However, it would help if you first took the time to read Flight Preparations, on pages three and four of your manual. By doing so, you will become familiar with your equipment (your flight deck console and your joystick controller) and you will decide which of three flights (autosimulator, simulator, or 3 STS 101 full-fledged flight) to select. Don't choose Flight #3 at first. Every good astronaut spends time practicing before the real thing!

Now, to show you what you'll be in for, I'm going to describe the play, assuming you're the Commander. First, you launch from Cape Canaveral at dawn. All systems are go.

Shut off the primary and backup engines, then close the cargo doors and check to see that the landing gear is up. Soon the countdown will be activited, and you must make sure that the switches on the primary engines are at MET 15 (*m*ission *e*lapsed *t*ime). Then ignite the main engines at MET 4, then lift off!

Once the *Discovery* is off the launching pad, you must stay on the correct course and pay close attention to the fuel/thrust panel. At 26 nautical miles you should separate from the solid rocket boosters and then soon after separate from the main external tank. At about 205 nautical miles you must quickly shut down all the engines because the closer the space shuttle is to the satellite's orbit, the greater the risk is of floating too far out in space.

When the shuttle first achieves orbit, the nose is pointed up, out of the line of sight of the satellite. In order to dock, you must be able to see the satellite; therefore, it's necessary to bring the nose down, which is done by adjusting pitch (up-down movement of the shuttle).

Besides pitch, you control the shuttle on three different axes—x, y, and z (called transitional). After docking with the satellite, it is time for the long descent home.

Instead of giving all the details of descent (by the way, I haven't given even half of the flight details), I'm just going to say that every time I try to land at Edwards Air Force Base, I crash into the desert—and that's at Flight #1, autosimulator, the easiest game level!

Needless to say, I haven't earned my wings. Successfully docking the shuttle five times and landing with 4,500 units of fuel makes you worthy of Pilot status and earns you a Pilot patch. If you make the sixth and final satellite docking with at least 7,500 fuel units in your tanks, you'll be one of the few, the proud, the elite—Space Shuttle Commanders.

Space Shuttle is not a game for everyone. If you're the

impatient type who likes to sit down and immediately begin playing a game, you probably will not like it at all.

However, if you have dreams of being an astronaut, this game is probably the next best thing to being in an actual NASA space shuttle simulator or a real shuttle.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	First Person/Space Adventure
Age Level	11 and up
Difficulty Level	Very Hard (detailed and complicated)
Overall Rating	A

WIZARD OF WOR™/by CBS Electronics

There are many different maze games. Some are like Pac-Man, where the player eats to stay alive. But in Wizard of Wor, the player just tries to stay alive.

The object in Wizard of Wor, which is based on the coin-op game of the same name, is to survive and destroy as many worlings as possible until you reach the Wizard of Wor. In a two-player game the players can be friendly and work together as a team or compete by zapping one another.

The game is played inside the dreaded dungeons (mazes) of the Mystical Kingdom of Wor. The player starts with a squadron of three worriors (spelled with two *o*'s). Each worrior battles with the worlings—burwors, garwors, and thorwors.

Another evil creature is Worluk—the wizard's winged

beast. After Worluk comes the wizard—a small, mean dude who shoots and wears a robe too big for him. Sound funny? It may be now, but when you meet up with him, it won't be all that hilarious.

The game has escape doors like the tunnels in Pac-Man. Another feature is the radar scanner that shows the location and movement of all things inside the dungeon except for the player's worrior.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	C
Graphics	C
Sound	B
Type	Maze
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B–

Mini Reviews of Action/Skill/Strategy Games

Several categories are combined in one here, but each of these games is one that requires more than just luck. Some mental skills, such as having a plan of action or memorizing and remembering patterns, are also required.

THE ACTIVISION DECATHLON™/by Activision

Every four years at the Olympics the words "Let the games begin" create excitement for hundreds of thousands of athletes and spectators. Activision has brought that excite-

ment home with The Activision Decathlon for the Atari 2600.

All ten decathlon events are included in this game—the 100-meter dash, long jump, shot put, high jump, 400-meter dash, 110 hurdles, discus, pole vault, javelin, and the 1,500 meter. In order to run, the player must maneuver the joystick rapidly from side to side. In races like the 1,500 meter, it can sure build muscles!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Sports
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B+

BLUEPRINT™/by CBS Electronics

Ollie Ogre has sneaked up to your Ollie Ogre killing machine and has caused parts of it to scatter all across town in Blueprint by CBS Electronics. Why did he do that? Well, it's the only thing that can stop him from chasing poor Daisy Damsel.

The player is the hero, who must find and put together the pieces of the contraption while avoiding bombs and the fiendish Fuzzy Wuzzy. After all, what else is a hero to do except save the damsel in distress?

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	B
Sound	B
Type	Maze
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B

ESCAPE FROM THE MINDMASTER™/by Starpath

The main word behind Starpath's Escape from the Mindmaster is curiosity. Everybody has it. Even the Mindmaster himself. Maybe that's why he snatched you in your sleep and placed you in a mazelike prison made of walls smooth as glass and endless corridors. As you fulfill your own curiosity, you realize that you're the subject of several different tests—tests that require intelligence, memory, coordination, reflexes, and plain old bravery.

REPORT CARD*

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	B
Type	First-Person Maze
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Hard
Overall Rating	B

*This game requires Starpath's Supercharger.

SHARK ATTACK™/by Apollo

In Shark Attack the player, who is a deep-sea diver, is searching for a treasure of diamonds which spilled from a sixteenth-century Spanish ship that sank during a fierce storm. The diver's mission is to retrieve diamonds in a maze of sticky kelp while avoiding sharks and the Loch Ness monster.

"The Loch Ness monster in the ocean?" I always thought "Nessie" was in a lake in Scotland. To me, this monster looks more like an octopus, and that's what it should be if it's going to be in the ocean. But other than that, Pac-Man lovers, this game offers a rich change of diet.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	C
Sound	C
Type	Maze
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B–

SKY JINKS™/by Activision

In Sky Jinks, designed by Bob Whitehead, the player controls a P41 airplane racer through a slalom course of red and blue pylons while avoiding trees and colorful hot-air balloons that drift lazily over green fields. The only criticism that I have is that the game is too much like Activision's

other game (Skiing), both featuring slalom courses, trees, timing, and a lot of dodging. The game, like other Activision games, has a game club—Sky Stars. If you get a time of thirty-seven seconds and don't miss any pylons, send them a picture of your TV screen.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	A
Graphics	A+
Sound	A
Type	Action
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

TRICK SHOT™/by Imagic

My dad's favorite cartridge is Trick Shot. In this game anyone with some practice can be a Minnesota Fats. The player can name his game—pool, English billiards, or trick shot combinations which test poise and accuracy. One or two players can compete for the winner's trophy. To place the cue the player moves his joystick. There are thirty-two possible cue positions. To control impact the player presses the joystick button. The longer it is held down, the harder the cue hits the ball.

Also, the player can control the angle of the shot by putting English (a spin) on the cue ball. If the player applies too much English on a shot, it rips the felt table covering and a realistic ripping sound results. My dad thinks Trick Shot is the closest thing to actually playing pool he's ever seen.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	B
Sound	B
Type	Sports Strategy
Age Level	12 and up
Difficulty Level	Easy to Hard
Overall Rating	B

Mini Reviews of Cute/Whimsical Games

Possibly because of the popularity of Pac-Man, companies of both home and arcade games are making more and more cute-type games instead of just the space shoot-'em-up type. Here are four short reviews of games I've enjoyed that belong in this cute category.

CRACKPOTS™/by Activision

Crackpots by Activision is wild and zany. The game is for one or two players and increases in difficulty as the game progresses.

Potsy, a wide-eyed rooftop gardener, drops pot after pot of petunias at creepy, crawling sewer bugs that are scaling up the multistoried apartment toward Potsy's pots of petunias.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	B
Type	Action
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B

KABOOM!™/by Activision

My favorite Activision game, which was designed by Larry Kaplan, is Kaboom! (By the way, Activision was the first company to give credit to the designer of the game. As a book names the author, Activision names the designer.) In Kaboom! the player has three buckets filled with water with which to catch bombs that the Mad Bomber drops. The object in Kaboom! is to catch as many bombs as possible without missing one.

The Mad Bomber sits on a wall with a devilish grin on his face and drops bombs in waves—first ten bombs, then twenty, then thirty, increasing in speed and number up to one hundred and fifty bombs.

When the player misses a bomb, "Boom!" it explodes. "Blam! Pow! Boommo!" go all the other bombs, and the player loses a bucket. When the player's three buckets are gone, the game is over.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A+
Originality	A+
Graphics	A+
Sound	A+
Type	Action
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	A+

PLAQUE ATTACK™/by Activision

Plaque Attack by Activision may look like a toothpaste commercial, but actually it's a game for one or two players that should help remind kids to brush their teeth.

In Plaque Attack the player controls a tube of toothpaste that must squirt away various types of plaque forming from invading hamburgers, ice cream, hot dogs, french fries, and hard candies.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Easy to Hard
Overall Rating	B

Q*BERT™/by Parker Brothers

Q*bert by Parker Brothers is a fast-action game based on the arcade game by Gottlieb. Q*bert is a frisky little character with a big snout who hops around a pyramid of colored cubes while avoiding bouncing balls and other creatures like Coily, Ugg, and Wrong Way. I agree with this character when he says "It's not easy being Q*bert—but it's fun!" (Q*bert for ColecoVision is a different game and is reviewed later on in the book.)

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	C
Graphics	C
Sound	C
Type	Action
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	C

Mini Reviews of Kiddie Games

To appeal to younger children, many video companies have entered into licensing agreements with entertainment companies, including Children's Television Workshop, creators of the Sesame Street characters; Walt Disney; Henson Associates, makers of the famous Muppets—Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy; and Charles Schulz, author of the well-known Peanuts comic strip.

To fit into the category of Kiddie Games, the game need

not be licensed. The main idea is that the game be especially appealing to children under the age of nine and not be too difficult for a small child to play.

COOKIE MONSTER MUNCH™/by Atari

Cookie Monster Munch by Atari is the best educational game for ages three to seven that I've seen because it's actually fun to play. Older kids and adults even find it fun! Atari, in cooperation with Children's Computer Workshop (C.C.W.), designed the game.

In two different screens, Cookie Monster runs around a simple maze picking up cookies and eating them. The game teaches direction, numbers, and counting. Cookie Monster Munch has ten different one- and two-player games with three levels of difficulty.

The game requires a specially designed controller for small children called the Kid's Controller, which can be used with other Sesame Street games (designed by C.C.W.) —Alpha Beam, Oscar's Trash Race, and Big Bird's Egg Catch. Packed in each game is a book which includes the instructions, a story, and several pages of games.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Educational
Age Level	7 and Under
Difficulty Level	Easy to Hard
Overall Rating	A

DONALD DUCK'S SPEEDBOAT™/by Atari

Donald is the duck, the river is the place, and the gold cup is the prize in this Disney game cartridge. The player helps Donald Duck win the gold cup by racing his boat through screen after screen of obstacles.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	C
Originality	B
Graphics	C
Sound	B
Type	Kiddie
Age Level	Up to 12 Years
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	C+

OINK!™/by Activision

The story line in Oink!, designed by Mike Lorenzen, goes like this. These three little pigs have a big problem: their least favorite visitor has just come calling—the wolf.

"Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin," squeals the pig.

Now that pig's courageous answer made the wolf angry. "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in."

If you want a more detailed story line, then read the "Three Little Pigs!" In Oink!, the wolf runs around the bottom of the screen blowing his stinky breath toward a wall of straw, wood, or bricks, slowly knocking them off one by one —a la Breakout.

The pig, however, has one defense. If he can plug up the

holes that the evil wolf makes, then the hole in the wall won't get big enough for the pig to fall through. As Activision says, "With three oinks and a growl, home remodeling has, at last, become a ball."

The thing I like best about Oink! is its story line. Activision has taken a favorite story with children and made it into a game. My five-year-old sister recognized the story from the game right away. Oh yes, she does have fun playing Oink!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	C
Originality	A
Graphics	B
Sound	C
Type	Kiddie/Action
Age Level	10 and Under
Difficulty Level	Medium
Overall Rating	B

SHOOTIN' GALLERY™/by Imagic

In Shootin' Gallery by Imagic the player is visiting the ol' shooting gallery at a local carnival. The player controls a handgun that shoots toward seventeen different targets. Simple game play, animated graphics, and circus music by a calliope make this game ideal for ages nine and under.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	C
Graphics	A
Sound	A

Type	Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	9 and Under
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B+

THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE™/by Atari

In Atari's The Sorcerer's Apprentice, Mickey Mouse, the apprentice, is in trouble. He has stolen the sorcerer's magic hat and is making falling stars turn into brooms which will help him fill his master's bathtub. The problem is, Mickey Mouse can't stop the brooms. The game has two different screens, super graphics, and excellent sounds.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	D
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Kiddie
Age Level	Up to 8 Years
Difficulty Level	Easy to Medium
Overall Rating	B

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE MUSICAL MATCHUPS™/by Parker Brothers

Strawberry Shortcake Musical Matchups is a favorite with little girls. The player must put back together five different Strawberry Land figures. This "berry" entertaining game would make a great gift for small Strawberry Shortcake lovers.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	C
Originality	A
Graphics	C
Sound	A
Type	Kiddie
Age Level	6 and Under
Difficulty Level	Easy
Overall Rating	B–

Mini Reviews of Space Shoot-'Em-Ups for Atari 2600

Space shoot-'em-up games were among the first types of games and are still popular, judging from the number of them on the market. With so many space shoot-'em-ups out there, shopping for one can be hard. Here are four mini reviews of some of the latest space shoot-'em-ups that I've really enjoyed playing on the Atari 2600.

COMMUNIST MUTANTS FROM SPACE™/by Starpath

In Starpath's Communist Mutants from Space the player has to vaporize mutant warriors before they take control of the earth and turn everyone into Bloodthirsty Communist Mutants. The player moves his gun back and forth, shooting upward at the Mother Creature, Mutant Eggs, and Diving Mutant Attackers. Nine levels of difficulty and these options: shields, time warp, penetrating fire, guided fire, and a choice of one to four players make Communist Mutants from Space an outstanding, fast-action shoot-'em-up.

REPORT CARD*

Game Play	A
Originality	C
Graphics	C
Sound	B
Type	Action
Age Level	Over 6
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B

* Note: this game requires Starpath's Supercharger.

COSMIC ARK™/by Imagic

In Cosmic Ark the player controls a spaceship rushing to save the many peculiar beasties from the planets of the Alpha Ro solar system. The sun of the Alpha Ro solar system is losing energy fast, very fast! Soon it will lose all of its energy and flicker out. In this game the player must battle menacing meteors and then suffer through the planetary defense system's laser fire—all to save the unique beasties of the planets of the Alpha Ro solar system.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	B
Type	Space Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	7 Years and up
Difficulty Level	Hard to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B+

CROSS FORCE™/by Spectravideo

Year after year, the evil Mirpods had been raiding the far corners of the galaxy and causing mass destruction in Cross Force by Spectravideo. Even worse, no weapon around could destroy the Mirpods. However, our scientists have developed a new weapon called a spectron. The spectron uses high concentrations of energy beamed from one flying platform to the other, destroying any Mirpods caught in between.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	C
Graphics	B
Sound	B
Type	Space Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B

FLASH GORDON™/by Fox Video Games

In this game the player is Flash Gordon, who has to rescue the spacemen in the mysterious Spider City. Debris, patrol ships, disrupter generators, and Spider Warriors make saving them difficult.

Flash Gordon is a different space game because it is played like Defender in an invisible maze. One can see the "invisible" maze by looking at the city map (radar screen) displayed at the bottom of the screen.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	B
Graphics	B
Sound	B
Type	Space Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	Over 8
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

SOLAR STORM™/by Imagic

As if this summer wasn't hot enough, Imagic has just forecast a temperature in the upper 9,000s in Solar Storm. The player shoots cricket-sounding lasers at Deltoid Blasters, Sun Spots, and the fast-moving Sizzloids. Watch out, because if too much of this solar debris reaches the planet, Imagic's weather forecast will come true.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	C
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Space Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Very Hard
Overall Rating	B+

SPACE CAVERN™/by Apollo

My favorite game by Apollo is Space Cavern. The player is an astronaut running back and forth in a cavern on an unknown planet while trying to survive the evil attacks of the flying Electrosauri above him, whose tentacles produce deadly bolts of electricity capable of disintegrating him and his crew. Another danger to the astronaut is the Marsupod, who lurks in caves on the ground. This Pac-Man–shaped but evil Marsupod does not shoot out any electrical charge, but it can kill the astronaut if it touches him. The astronaut looks real, and he even has a shadow which changes positions every time he moves. When he is hit by an electro-molecular charge or is engulfed by a Marsupod, his skeleton will glow, spelling his end.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	C
Originality	C
Graphics	B
Sound	B
Type	Space Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	12 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B–

2

The Atari 5200: Super System

If Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, Dig Dug, Moon Patrol, Battlezone, Vanguard, Space Dungeon, Pengo, Tempest, Robotron, Xevious, Centipede, Galaxian, Defender, and Qix (just some of the titles available or soon to be released) are favorites with you, then for sure the Atari 5200 Super System is for you.

A big advantage to the 5200 is a new switch box which eliminates one of the wires to the system (less mess with wires). Also, when you've finished playing a game, you simply turn the system off and the switch box selects the TV antenna (no need to mess with the back of the TV set). But if you own another game system, this new type switch box can be a problem because nothing else works on it. To play another game system, you will have to get the old screwdriver out.

Another advantage is the power transformer. It rests near the middle of the cable instead of at the end, where most game systems are located. Some transformers are so big that

when you plug them into the wall socket they take up so much room you can't plug anything else in, or they are so heavy they won't stay plugged in unless you prop something against them.

The biggest headache with the 5200 is the all-in-one controller—a twelve-button keypad with joystick and four fire buttons (two on each side of the controller). Although I do like the shape and feel of the controller in my hand, the joystick is not self-centering, which means that when it is released it does not automatically return to the center. Thus, the player can easily become frustrated during games in which precision movement is a must.

The neatest thing about the Atari controller is the pause button. If you've ever had to interrupt a great scoring game to answer the phone, you'll appreciate this feature. Another great idea is the red light which shines out brightly in the light or in the dark to remind you that you've forgotten to turn off the system.

Available for the 5200 is the Trak-Ball Controller—really great for such games as Centipede, RealSports Soccer, and Galaxian. Some games are even voice-enhanced! One game —RealSports Baseball—is the first home video game with voice that doesn't require the purchase of a separate speech synthesizer! The umpire calls everything from balls and strikes to foul balls and outs. In Berzerk the voice feature includes the taunts and jeers of the robots.

In my opinion, if you want to bring the arcade experience home, you have three choices—the Atari 5200, the ColecoVision, or the Vectrex (vector graphics). It all depends on which games you like the best. Atari claims that as of now, with their Atari 2600 cartridge adaptor, more games can be played on the 5200 than on any other system. If this factor is important to you, then I'd check out the game catalogs of the other systems or do some counting at a store that carries a complete selection of games for the systems you're considering.

DIG DUG™/by Atari

In this game by Atari licensed from Namco makers of the coin-op game of the same name, Dig Dug is a little character who wears a helmet, carries a pump, and scores points by blowing up monsters with the pump or by dropping rocks on them. The monsters' names are Pooka, who wears goggles, and Fygar, the dragon, who spits out fire. There is more than one Pooka and more than one Fygar. The player starts out with three Dig Dugs. Every time a Pooka runs over Dig Dug or a Fygar hits Dig Dug with his hot flaming breath, Dig Dug loses one of his lives.

But Dig Dug can get even with the monsters and score points for the player. Here's how. For Dig Dug to stun monsters, the player presses the pump button (fire button), and to blow up the monsters, the player presses the pump button and keeps it held down. Or Dig Dug can drop rocks on the monsters by using the joystick to dig out the dirt from under the rocks to make them fall. The player should be sure to get Dig Dug out of the path of the falling rock or else—"squoosh!"

For the highest score, the player should aim to destroy multiple monsters with each rock. The following shows the number of points for destroying monsters with rocks: one monster, 1,000 points; two monsters, 2,500 points; three monsters, 4,000 points; and four monsters, 6,000 points.

Dig Dug is in some ways like Pac-Man. For example, in Pac-Man the player's fate comes when Pac-Man is touched or engulfed by a monster—the same with Dig Dug. In Pac-Man the game is played in a maze. It's the same with—oops, not exactly. Dig Dug "makes" his own maze by traveling underground.

As in Pac-Man, the player is awarded a fruit or an object. In Pac-Man these rewards come randomly, but in Dig Dug the rewards come after the player drops two rocks. Dig Dug

has to run over the rewards (carrot, turnip, and the like) before the monsters get him. The rewards are these: carrot, 400 points; turnip, 600 points; mushroom, 800 points; cucumber, 1,000 points; eggplant, 2,000 points; and clover leaf, 4,000 points. There are more rewards, but I don't want to spoil the fun.

Dig Dug may not become as popular as Pac-Man, but he deserves a medal for trying to protect his garden even though it seems hopeless. The game features eight separate screens, one- or two-player options, and two skill levels.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action/Strategy
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

JUNGLE HUNT™/by Atari

Jungle. Just the word sounds exciting, but when you combine it to make Jungle Hunt, that sounds adventurous! That's probably why Atari licensed the arcade game Jungle Hunt from Taito for the Atari 2600 and 5200.

In Jungle Hunt the player is the hero, who has to save his kidnapped lady companion from a tribe of cannibals. Our hero has to go through the jungle to save her. If he doesn't save her in time, she'll be turned into the main course for dinner!

In the first part of the jungle, our hero has to swing from vine to vine. If he misses a vine and falls, he loses one chance

to save his companion. On the beginner level, he has five chances, or lives, in all to make the rescue. In the rain forest on higher levels, gorillas are on some of the vines.

The second part of the jungle is the river. The hero has to swim through the river while either avoiding crocodiles or stabbing them with his knife. Another danger in the river that he must watch out for are the large bubbles of the Mysterious Murk. Our hero has to avoid these bubbles by swimming between or under them. But the player has to keep an eye on our hero's air meter, for if our hero's under water when his air runs out, he loses one chance to save his lady friend—"Blub, blub, blub!"

After the river comes the mountain slide. Our hero has to jump over or duck falling boulders. Every once in a while a very large boulder appears. To get past it, our hero must duck.

After jumping over boulders, our hero has to jump over two cannibals who are guarding the large cooking pot the lady is hanging over. After jumping over the first cannibal, the player must take extra caution in jumping over the second one, for if the hero jumps too far, he'll meet his fate in the frying pan—er, the cooking pot!

There is also a version of Jungle Hunt for the Atari 2600. Since the 5200 and 2600 are different machines, people shouldn't buy Jungle Hunt for the 2600 in hopes of getting the arcade or 5200 version; however, Atari claims its 5200 version is better than the arcade game. I haven't played the coin-op game that much to make a comment, but I do know that the 5200 version is super fun to play.

After several days of playing, my high score was 15,500. I managed to rescue the lady from the fate of the cooking pot many times, but I haven't made it through the harder level of swinging on vines with gorillas on them.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action/Adventure
Age Level	7 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B+

KANGAROO™/by Atari

Kangaroo is simple to play, yet very challenging! It's one that both young children and adults can enjoy. Atari licensed the game from Sun Electronics, which makes the arcade game. Mother Kangaroo is trying to save her baby, who has been kidnapped by a gang of evil monkeys. She has to jump from branch to branch, climb up ladders, jump over logs, avoid thrown apples, and punch out menacing monkeys with her boxing glove.

The number one threat is the evil monkeys. These monkeys crawl down from the top of the screen (where Baby Kangaroo is), armed with an apple that looks more like a coconut to me. Come to think of it, it would be more realistic for monkeys to be in a coconut tree!

The monkeys throw apples at Mother Kangaroo to stop her from saving her baby. Before throwing an apple, a monkey stops, takes aim, rears back, and then throws. Mother Kangaroo must hop over the apple if it is rolling, or duck under it if it is in the air. If Mother Kangaroo saves her baby, she then goes on to the next screen. There are four different screens in all.

In the second screen Mother Kangaroo has to jump over large gaps in stairways of logs. After several hours of com-

bined play, I finally made it to the third screen, where Baby Kangaroo is in a cage at the top of a column of monkeys. Mother Kangaroo must make this column lower by punching out the monkeys one by one.

The fourth screen is a deluxe version of the second. The monkeys now not only roll or throw the apples, they can drop them on top of Mother Kangaroo.

The player gets points by punching out a monkey and saving Baby Kangaroo. Fruits are also big point makers. The player can get a fruit by making Mother Kangaroo jump up and get one from a tree limb.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Climbing
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

JOUST™/by Atari

Hundreds of years ago many arguments were settled by a joust (a fight on horseback between two knights with lances). In Joust by Atari, licensed from Williams Electronics for the 5200 (also for the 2600), the player is a knight flying around on the back of an ostrich and knocking other knights off theirs with a lance. He must do that while avoiding lava pits, lava monsters, and screaming demon birds. I don't think it happened exactly like that hundreds of years ago, but when you have a game as exciting as this one, who cares!

For those of you who have played the arcade game and

already know the story line, then let me say this: Joust, in my opinion, is the closest thing a home game, without a coin slot, can be to its arcade ancestor. In other words, it includes everything from the arcade game plus four different levels of difficulty.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	A

MARIO BROTHERS™/by Atari

First there was Donkey Kong, then there was Donkey Kong Junior, and now there is Mario Brothers, all licensed from Nintendo, makers of the arcade game. In Mario Brothers by Atari the player is Mario, who must rid the screen of all the evil turtles, fireballs, or lobsters. Gold coins add extra bonus points, while gold coin screens add even more bonus points.

Mario Brothers, like Joust, is exactly like the arcade game. The only difference is the controlling. Many times on this version Mario will run around, stop, jump, and do all sorts of things without my controlling it. Maybe it's just the joystick, because many of my readers have had the same problem. No, not with Mario Brothers, but with other games for the 5200.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Climbing/Action
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	A

POLE POSITION™/by Atari

Pole Position by Atari is an arcade-to-home adaptation that gives the player the sensation of driving a real race car. The player must run a qualifying lap before actually racing. The variations include four different racetracks with a choice of one to eight laps. The player shifts, steers, and accelerates through a twisting course while avoiding other cars and large off-the-road signs.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Driving
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B+

RealSports SOCCER™/by Atari

In RealSports Soccer by Atari the player has an option to kick high, medium, or low. He can also control every single man on his team. The game can be played by two players, by one player against the computer, or, if the player is in the mood for just watching, by the computer against itself.

Because of the outstanding graphics and the closeness to the outdoor sport, Atari's Soccer is the best soccer game I've played.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Sports
Age Level	12 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

RealSports TENNIS™/by Atari

Billie Jean King probably would enjoy Atari's RealSports Tennis because of the special blend of outstanding graphics, sounds, and game play. She also might enjoy the game because it requires a combination of luck, skill, practice, and endurance. However, John McEnroe probably wouldn't enjoy the game because of its rules. They're the same as in real tennis except that the computer makes all the calls—and you can't argue with a computer!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Closeness to Real Game	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Sports
Age Level	12 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	A–

VANGUARD™/by Atari

Fly your spaceship through seven tunnel zones filled with obstacles—hostile spaceships, missiles, and alien creatures. Waiting for you at the end of the tunnel is the great Gond, who challenges you to a death battle. Vanguard, a version of the arcade game by Centuri, is for one or two players, and features normal or repeat fire. The player has the option to continue down the tunnel from where a player last lost his life instead of starting over at the beginning of the tunnel.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	C
Closeness to Arcade	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action/Space
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B

3

ColecoVision: The Arcade Experience

The ColecoVision by Coleco is a super–high-resolution game system with 16k-word memory capability and the capacity to show sixteen moving objects on the screen—many, many times higher than that of the Atari 2600 or Intellivision, but the same as the Atari 5200. It boasts the following modules: Expansion Module #1, which allows the player to play Atari 2600 compatible games, and Expansion Module #2, a steering wheel/foot pedal device that comes with the game Turbo. Also available is Adam, which will turn the game system into a computer.

I can tell you about the first two modules because I have them. The Expansion Module #1 is easy to use. When you want to play an Atari 2600 compatible game, you simply insert the module into the slot located on the front side of the game system. The module must be removed before playing a game on the ColecoVision.

The steering wheel/foot pedal device with Turbo makes a

great gift for the kid who already owns the system. The thrill of the game is made more realistic with hands on the wheel and foot on the pedal. A clever dad might want to attach these devices to a child-size racing car for even more excitement.

The controllers are the removable plug-in type, a big plus if you'd like to try out controllers made by another company or the Super Action Controller or Roller Controller by Coleco. The controllers that come with the system fit nicely into a storage area on top of the system. What I don't like about them is that they are awkward to hold, and the knob-type joystick is too small and doesn't respond well.

What I dislike about the system is waiting around for the game to begin. After inserting the game cartridge, a title screen appears and you wait for about fifteen seconds for the game option menu to appear. It seems like an eternity to wait to play such great Coleco games as Looping, Zaxxon, Lady Bug, or Donkey Kong Junior. Other companies, like Parker Brothers and Probe 2000 (Odyssey), are also making games for the ColecoVision. For the most part, the games offered have been arcade-to-home adaptions, but there are other games, such as Ken Uston Black Jack Poker, Horse Racing, and sports and strategy/adventure games.

DONKEY KONG JUNIOR™/by Coleco

In Coleco's Donkey Kong Junior, a version of the arcade game by Nintendo, the player takes the role of a baby gorilla who must save his papa from Mario, the carpenter. To save his papa, Junior must race through a dangerous jungle inhabited by evil creatures. Once at the end, Junior jumps on the flashing key that will save his papa. Changing scenes and deluxe animation make Donkey Kong Junior an outstanding sequel to the game Donkey Kong.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Climbing
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

FROGGER™/by Parker Brothers

In this game, licensed from Sega, the player is an unfortunate little frog who must get to his house by jumping across a freeway and hopping on logs and alligator tails to get over a treacherous river. Once on the last log, the player must have his timing just right to get his frog in one of the five notches that are the froggy houses.

Getting across is easy at first, but it soon becomes very difficult. The player has a choice of a fast or slow game and also has a choice of a game with or without music. Now, tell me how to choose those options on the arcade game by the same name!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Climbing
Age Level	5 and up

Difficulty Level	Easy to Hard
Overall Rating	A

LADY BUG™/by Coleco

Lady Bug has often been called "just another Pac-Man clone." I'll agree that the game play is somewhat like Pac-Man, but there is far more to Lady Bug than meets the lady's eye—er, ladybug's eye . . .

In Lady Bug, licensed from Universal makers of the arcade game, the player controls a ladybug that runs around a maze eating seeds (small white dots) and avoiding four evil insects. Also, the border around the maze is a timer. Each time it changes color, another evil beetle will be released into the maze. When four evil beetles have been released, a bonus vegetable appears in the center. If the ladybug can get to it, all the beatles will be stunned for about six to eight seconds.

At the top of the right side of the screen is a red box with the word "special." Below that is a yellow box with the word "extra," and below that is the blue "score multiplier indicator" with the numbers 2x, 3x, and 5x. These boxes come into play when the ladybug eats the letters *s, p, e, c, i, a,* and *l* when they're red (red box), the letters *e, x, t, r,* and *a* when they're yellow (yellow box), and three hearts when they're blue (blue score-multiplier box).

When the word "special" is spelled, the ladybug will advance to a special Vegetable Harvest Bonus Screen, but after many weeks of playing my ladybug hasn't made it there yet. When you spell the word "extra," the ladybug will gain an extra life. The score multiplier just boosts the score of everything.

My only complaint with Lady Bug involves the controller. At times it is very hard to maneuver my ladybug, especially when she's being chased by an evil beetle. The player might

want to try out WICO Corporation's Joystick/Keypad All-In-One Controller for ColecoVision.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Maze
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A+

LOOPING™/by Coleco

In Looping, an arcade-to-home adaptation licensed from Venture Line, a fighter plane gets behind enemy air defenses. At the beginning of the game, the player taxis his airplane down the runway and lifts off into the wild blue yonder.

Right after taking off, the player has to avoid floating balloons and destroy missiles, one on the left side of the screen and one inside a yellow structure on the right side of the screen. If the player shoots both missiles, a sign on the top of the screen will read "Gate Open."

The player now flies to the right and goes through a gate that leads into Pipeland, my name for a maze of pipes. The player has to guide his plane through the maze and not touch a pipe.

After leaving the main section of Pipeland, the player either avoids or shoots at drops of green water coming from a spigot. In the next room of Pipeland there is a Twinkle Monster, which floats around. The player either avoids it or shoots it.

Hold tight, for the player now enters the outer room of Pipeland. He tries not to be hit by multicolored bouncing balls in order to enter the inner section of the outer room. If the player makes it this far, he will see the word "END." A cute tune plays, and the player goes on to a harder level.

The controller on the ColecoVision operates much like the controls on a real airplane—pulling back on the stick makes the plane go up and pushing forward on the stick makes the plane go down. It takes some practice, but after a while the player should be able to fly like the Blue Angels or Thunderbirds.

The player has a choice of four different skill levels. Because the game takes some practice, I suggest starting at Skill 1. I'm still on that level, and my high score is 49,970 points.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Defender/Maze
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Hard
Overall Rating	B+

MOUSE TRAP™/by Coleco

In this game, based on the arcade game by Exidy, the player is a cheese-chomping mouse that dashes around a maze consisting of long hallways and colored doors, chased by four cats. The player opens and closes red, yellow, and blue doors to trap or make an escape from the cats. Bones can magically transform the mouse into a dog so he can eat

the cats in case he is cornered. Points are earned for eating a cheese, biting a cat, and clearing the maze. Bonus points are earned for eating special prizes which appear in specific spots throughout the maze.

A controller overlay is included with the game. The red, yellow, and blue door buttons are on the overlay, as well as the dog button. Graphics are excellent. On Level 2 and up, the evil hawk appears. The sounds are also excellent. When a cat is eaten by the dog, a meow cry is heard. Moreover, a little tune is heard during the game, but, a word of warning: the tune can drive the player "bananas, up the wall!" an expression I often use when my little sister bugs me!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A–
Sound	A
Type	Maze
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

Q*BERT™/by Parker Brothers

Q*bert (the player) is a lovable, orange, fuzzy ball with legs and a long snout. He hops around a floating pyramid of twenty-eight cubes, making them change colors for points. That's the object of the game. It's very simple. The troublesome task of Q*bert is avoiding all his enemies—red, bouncing rubber balls, a purple egg that hatches a hopping purple snake named Coily, and spider-looking creatures named Ugg.

At both sides of the pyramid are swirling disks that act as

elevators when they are hopped on by Q*bert. The elevators bring Q*bert to the top of the pyramid, and they are very useful when Coily is after him, because all Q*bert needs to do is hop on one and Coily will follow him—except there will be no elevator. Coily will jump, fall, and scream ("ahhhhhhh") as he plummets from the pyramid.

The only useful objects besides the elevators are the bouncing green balls. Hit one and everything except you freezes for a moment, and this gives you a few extra seconds to move on some more cubes or plan your next move.

If one of the evil objects—bouncing red balls, Coily, or the spider-looking creatures—hits Q*bert, then he mumbles and a word balloon with symbols that look something like (#!?!) appears on the screen as Q*bert meets his fate. In other words, Q*bert says it for you.

In Parker Brothers' Q*bert for the ColecoVision, there are nine different levels of play, each consisting of four different rounds. Each round and each level is different. I don't know what some of the levels are like, because I've only made it to Level Three.

But get this—my mom can make it to Level Five! The other day she played Q*bert on a coin-op for the first time. On the very first play she made it through Level Two, something she claims she couldn't have done if she hadn't practiced at home first.

Although there are some differences between the coin-op version by Gottlieb and the version for the ColecoVision, it's a great arcade-to-home adaptation. Q*bert is also available for the Atari 2600, 5200, Atari computers, and Intellivision. The version for the Atari 2600 isn't as good as the ColecoVision version.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	A

SMURF RESCUE IN GARGAMEL'S CASTLE™/by Coleco

In Coleco's Smurf Rescue in Gargamel's Castle the evil Gargamel has kidnapped Smurfette and is keeping her in his laboratory. The player takes the role of a brave little Smurf who must journey through fields, woods, and caverns while avoiding hawks, spiders, and bats. If the Smurf survives all that, then he saves the sweet Smurfette.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action
Age Level	6 through 12
Difficulty Level	Easy to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

TURBO™/by Coleco

In Turbo by Coleco, a coin-op game licensed from Sega, the player controls a racing car that must pass thirty cars in ninety-nine seconds. The game starts out in the city and then continues on to a tree-lined countryside, flatlands with mountains on the horizon, a tunnel through the mountains, and a snow-covered countryside. Oil slicks, running off the road, other cars, and ambulances are the hazards.

Turbo for the ColecoVision system includes the Expansion Module #2, which is a steering wheel, gearshift, and gas pedal.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Driving
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

4

Intellivision: The Thinking Person's System

For Intellivision II owners there are all kinds of add-ons, such as a speech synthesizer, a music synthesis module, an Atari 2600 cartridge module, and a computer keyboard, either available or in the planning stage.

What I like about this newer model (even though it doesn't look nearly as expensive as the older one) is its smaller size—it fits more easily into a suitcase! Also, I like the red light which reminds me to turn off the machine when I am finished playing. Another new feature is the removable controllers (in the older model, the controllers were wired in). If one controller goes bad, you can replace it without taking the whole unit in to be repaired. Removable controllers also allow the player to try out different controllers made by other companies.

Now, to what I don't like—there is no pause feature on the

system unless it's programmed into the game. Also, at times I get frustrated with the disc controllers (used instead of the joystick). The disc takes some getting used to, especially immediately after having played with a joystick.

To see the difference between the graphic capabilities of the Atari 2600 and the Intellivision, play a game like Imagic's Demon Attack, the same game designed for two different systems. Each is a good game, but right away you will see how much more Imagic could do with Demon Attack for the Intellivision because of its superior graphics.

The greatest feature of the Intellivision game system, I think, is the wide variety of games available. There are games for action/space shoot-'em-up lovers. One excellent example is Activision's Dreadnaught Factor. There are cute/whimsical games for players who fall in love with characters like Chef Peter Pepper, in BurgerTime by Mattel, and Q*Bert, the fuzzy star of Parker Brothers' game of the same name. Last and probably most important, because no other system has done it so well, are strategy games for the thinking person, for example, USCF Chess, Las Vegas Poker and Black Jack, ABPA Backgammon, and Sea Battle by Mattel.

ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS—TREASURE OF TARMIN™/by Mattel Electronics

A popular game today is Dungeons and Dragons, and Mattel Electronics, recognizing that, has come out with Advanced Dungeons and Dragons series. The first game in the series was criticized for not being a role-playing game, as the board game is. That is definitely not true with the second game, Treasure of Tarmin.

In Advanced Dungeons and Dragons—Treasure of Tarmin, the player must walk through a complicated system of mazes and dungeons in the castle-island of Tarmin in search of the Tarmin Treasure. Besides the Tarmin Trea-

sure, the dreaded Minotaur and his monster companions have stolen other treasures, as well as war weapons, spiritual weapons, pieces of armor, and useful items. The castle is filled with evil creatures, spiritual objects, lethal weapons, treasures, and, most important of all, the Tarmin Treasure, guarded by the Minotaur.

Probably one of the most important features in this game is the variety of different objects and monsters. For instance, the player starts the game with a bow, a quiver of arrows, and a sack of flour, and as the player walks through the maze he will discover war and spiritual weapons such as knives, axes, darts, spears, crossbows, scrolls, small and large fireballs, small and large lightning bolts, and a spiritual weapon book. There are also pieces of armor like small and large shields, gauntlets, hauberks, helmets, breastplates, and small and large rings. The treasures in the game are coins, necklaces, ingots, lamps, chalices, and crowns.

The most interesting category, however, is the useful item category. In this category there are all sorts of objects that do awesome things like refresh the player's war and spiritual strength, objects that allow the player to see through the maze walls, objects that turn the player invisible to all monsters except the Minotaur . . . and that's not all . . .

This game might be a little confusing for some people, but for Dungeons and Dragons lovers, and for people who like adventure, this may be just their game!!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	First Person/Adventure
Age Level	8 and up

Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

BURGERTIME™/by Mattel Electronics

Have you ever wondered what goes on inside the kitchen of your favorite hamburger joint? The chef could be risking his life just to make that two-dollar hamburger you ordered.

Now wait a minute . . . no everyday chef is going to risk his life just to finish a hamburger! No sirree, that doesn't happen in real life, but anything can happen in a video game —especially in BurgerTime by Mattel Electronics, licensed from Data East, maker of the BurgerTime coin-op game. I reviewed the game on the Intellivision, but it is also available for the Atari 2600 and the Aquarius, Apple II, Apple II Plus, Apple IIe, and IBM computers.

In BurgerTime the player is Chef Peter Pepper, who must make a hamburger consisting of a bun, meat, lettuce, and tomato (hold the onions!) while he avoids hot dogs, pickles, and an egg. Chef Peter Pepper builds the hamburgers (usually four to a screen) by running up ladders and across planks that hold the ingredients. When the chef runs over an ingredient (say the meat) on a plank, the ingredient will fall down to the next plank. The hamburger is finished when all the ingredients have been walked over and dropped below the maze of ladders and planks.

It may sound easy, but remember the hot dogs, pickles, and the egg that chase Peter Pepper around the maze trying to catch him and close down this hamburger joint for good.

Fortunately, Chef Peter Pepper has protection against these nasties. The nasties become foiled when an ingredient is dropped on top of a falling one. Another way to foil nasties is to throw a pinch of pepper on them. Chef Peter Pepper starts out with four pinches of pepper and gains extra ones by gobbling up ice cream, coffee, ketchup, or french fries that appear on the screen.

There's no doubt about it, BurgerTime is a humorous game. It is also a fun and exciting one. Two of my mom's friends liked the game so much they stayed up all night playing it! Gee, if I tried that I'd be in worse shape than Chef Peter Pepper when he's caught by a hot dog!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Climbing/Maze
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

BUZZ BOMBERS™/by Mattel Electronics

In Buzz Bombers the player is a can of bee repellent that moves along the bottom of the screen and sprays up at a swarm of bees. These bees aren't your usual bees—they're buzz bombers! To the tune of "The Flight of the Bumblebee," buzz bombers fly down in a set pattern (invisible tiers) to the ground in order to pollinate flowers. When a buzz bomber reaches the ground, a flower takes its place. When that happens, there's less room for the player's spray can to maneuver. When the player's spray can is completely hemmed in—well, it's time to get another can and try that same level again.

Other members of this buzz-bombing group are the killer bees. Killer bees are white and fly very, very fast; buzz bombers are yellow, fly slow, and stop every now and then. Fortunately, killer bees appear only on later waves and very few of them come.

When a buzz bomber or killer bee is hit with a blast of repellent, it turns into a honeycomb. A friendly blue hummingbird will eat these honeycombs, giving the player points. When all the bees have been shot by repellent, the wave is over. When five waves are over, a surprise appears, and after the tenth wave, a bigger surprise comes. The hard part is completing five or ten waves!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	B
Sound	A
Type	Strategy/Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium
Overall Rating	B

DEMON ATTACK™/by Imagic

Demon Attack is a great way to involve yourself in a real scary story! Here's why. In relentless waves demons attack the player's ship on the moon. At the lower right-hand corner is earth, which the player probably wishes he were on.

The graphics in Demon Attack are super! The moon has craters, the earth has bright colors, and even the demons look kind of real, but the best graphic in the game is the Demon Base. The Demon Base appears after every third wave. The player's rocket ship blasts off from the moon while an eerie tune is played, and "Presto!", the Demon Base appears with red-hot fury and anger.

Demons dive toward the player as they protect their base, which has a shield flickering on and off. The player can wear down the shield with his laser shots. When the shield is gone,

it takes careful aiming to shoot through an opening that moves fast from left to right. Hit it in the right place and "Kapow! Boom! Crackle! Blam!", the Demon Base blows up like Fourth of July fireworks.

However, that's not all; the demons attack again, this time with spiral bombs that explode when they hit the ground. If the player is anywhere near a bomb when it explodes, the player loses a man. The whole idea of this game is just plain survival.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Space Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

DRACULA™/by Imagic

Poor Count Dracula. People run from him. Police harass him. The birds and animals are unfriendly. He's allergic to the sun. He can't sleep at night. All this happens to a guy who's just minding his own business. "Well, Drac—I'd say you have some grave problems!"

No matter if you love Dracula movies or your neck tingles every time one comes to town, Dracula, designed by Alan Smith for Imagic, will give you a chance to see the life of this poor count from his point of view.

The object in this game is to keep Drac alive by biting his nightly supply of people for blood before the sun rises. A

vulture, a white dog, and patrolling constables do their best to keep him from his work.

When the game begins, Drac flies from his tomb in bat form. When he gets over the main city sidewalk, he turns into human form and the search begins! Drac walks the sidewalk, watching for late-night people and looking for signs of life—eyes peering out darkened windows—from each apartment. He knocks. The dweller is so terrified that he bursts out of the house, stunning Drac. "Curses!"

Dracula is faster. He chases the victim up and down the sidewalk, even into the street. He must watch out for the night patrolman, who will hurl wooden stakes at him.

Three different skill levels make the game fair for everyone. I'd suggest starting at the easy level until Drac has had enough practice biting his victims. There are three different game versions: one player controlling both disks; two players, one controlling Dracula and the other the victims; and two players taking turns as Drac.

The graphics are very detailed. The night is dark and stormy, with bolts of lightning striking across the sky and puddles of water standing in the street. The victims look like people. My only complaint is Drac. He looks more like a black and white Pink Panther figure; however his mouth opens and closes at the appropriate times.

The sound at the beginning and ending is eerie organ music. The crackle of thunder can be heard after a bolt of lightning. Other interesting sound effects give it that perfect scary touch.

Graphics, sound, and game play make Dracula a perfect game for Halloween. Practice this game before springing it on your friends at a party come the night of ghosts, goblins, and zombies. ZOMBIES! I forgot to tell you about the zombies in this game. Oh well, you'll have to figure them out for yourself.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action/Adventure
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

DREADNAUGHT FACTOR™/by Activision

According to The New American Webster's Dictionary, a dreadnought is a powerful battleship. Even though in Activision's latest game for the Intellivision, Dreadnaught Factor, the word is spelled with an *a* instead of an *o*, the game has a powerful battleship. Read on!

In Dreadnaught Factor, designed by Tom Loughry, the galactic radar of the water planet Terra has revealed a strange, very large configuration that is 100 parsecs (about 326 light years) away and is closing in at an ultrafast speed. The player controls a lightweight Terran hyperfighter that takes off from its fleet in order to investigate this unknown factor. After leaving Terra's stargate and flying for about 91 parsecs, the player learns that this factor is a gigantic alien battleship (larger than the entire playing screen of the television set).

It is soon learned that this powerful battleship is a dangerous floating fortress bent on destroying a planet. So if this "dreadnaught" is closing in on Terra so fast, there's no time to lose!

The player must destroy the dreadnaught by guiding his hyperfighter through a series of attack passes. On each attack pass the player shoots lasers at large and small cannons,

bridges, and small launchers that fire heat-seeking missiles at the player. Also, on each pass the player drops deadly strontium bombs on black silos, which house the doomsday warheads that will destroy Terra once Terra's stargate is reached. The player also drops the bombs on the dreadnaught's engines and black air vents. Once all the vents are destroyed, a cell of high pressure will build inside the dreadnaught, causing it to blow up.

Seven levels of difficulty, ranging from one dreadnaught on Level 1 to ten on Level 5 to one hundred on Level 6, make Dreadnaught Factor a challenging game. Each dreadnaught has a different shape to keep the game interesting. I haven't made it through Level 5 yet, and Tom Loughry hasn't passed Level 6 yet. Here's one game where the player has a chance to beat the designer at his own game.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Space/Strategy
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Hard
Overall Rating	A

LOCK 'N' CHASE™/by Mattel Electronics

No matter how hard the player of Mattel's Lock 'n' Chase tries, he'll realize that crime doesn't pay. The player is a thief robbing the local bank by stealing gold coins and treasures while avoiding policemen in hot pursuit. But he'll eventually be caught.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	B
Sound	A
Type	Maze
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B+

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE—THE POWER OF HE-MAN™/by Mattel Electronics

When I was about six years old, my hero was Spiderman. I loved the way he spun webs from his fingers and the wisecracks he made to the villain after he caught him. The latest hero for young children is He-Man.

In Masters of the Universe—The Power of He-Man the player takes the role of the hero, who must fly thirty miles in his Wind Raider to the edge of the wilderness, where lies the realm of the villain, Skeletor. He-Man has a limited supply of fuel for the perilous journey through fireballs. If the player runs out of fuel or is hit by a fireball, then he loses one of his five chances.

During the journey the player will have to use some of the Wind Raider's weapons. Press one of the top buttons and the Wind Raider will fire its cannons toward fireballs, and press one of the bottom buttons and the Wind Raider will drop a bomb. When the bomb comes in contact with the ground it will make a crater, and hopefully Skeletor, who runs frantically around the bottom, will fall into it for 1,000 points.

If the player successfully completes the journey, then the Wind Raider will land and He-Man (player) will confront Skeletor on the ground. The player must avoid lightning

balls and power bolts that Skeletor will fire at He-Man. Press one of the buttons and He-Man will raise a shield that will deflect any lightning balls or power bolts. When He-Man reaches Skeletor, they battle with swords for a minute. Then He-Man will chase Skeletor through mountains, forests, and finally Castle Greyskull itself.

In all, there are four different screens (scenes), one for air attack and three for ground attack. Also, there are some automatic functions, such as He-Man's leaping into the Wind Raider and dueling with Skeletor. These provide a few seconds of needed and restful intermission.

This game is sure to please He-Man hero lovers. Even adults who know nothing about He-Man might enjoy the game. However, one thing missing from the game, which my little sister noticed immediately, is the girl.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B–
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A–
Type	Action
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

MICROSURGEON™/by Imagic

On page sixty-two of the January 31, 1983, issue of *Time* magazine is a picture which looks like a home video game by Imagic. It's not an advertisement but a picture showing a new medical technique called nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR).

If proven safe, NMR just may replace X-rays and the CAT

scanner for diagnosing certain illnesses or for looking at the damage done by strokes or injuries. Instead of using radiation, NMR uses powerful magnetic forces to see. As *Time* put it, NMR can picture "the throbbing of the brain to the beat of the heart, the coursing of the blood through a maze of vessels, the dance of molecules in a working muscle, the steady growth of a tumor."

Microsurgeon for the Intellivision by Imagic does all this, but it goes one step further. The doctor may not only see "the internal landscape," but he also has the power to cure any problems that may show up.

The story line goes like this. Hundreds of people have been exposed to toxic vapors from a wrecked tanker carrying tons of unstable gas. According to Dr. Weissbult, a microsurgeon at a nearby medical center, "the fumes attack one's immunity to the simplest disorders. For example, tar deposits suddenly fester on the lungs; tumors develop and grow at an alarming rate; ordinary cholesterol deposits interfere with blood circulation; even common bacterial infections become potentially lethal."

The only way to cure these conditions is microsurgery, in which the player controls a robot probe by a remote-control scanner (the game controls) through one of two hundred randomly produced patients (the accident victims). After studying the instruction booklet, the player can control the robot probe to pump out ultrasonic rays to cure cholesterol buildup in the veins and arteries, gallstones, kidney stones, tapeworms in the intestines, and tumors in the brain. He can choose an antibiotic to get rid of bacterial infections or aspirin to kill viruses.

The scoring in Microsurgeon is very innovative. After surgery, the patient's bill is revealed—the score! In other words, this is one doctor bill that you like to see expensive! By the way, I've killed many patients.

The graphics are so realistic that when I first saw that picture in *Time* I thought it was a picture of Microsurgeon. The sounds of the heartbeat and the swishing noises of the

air in the lungs make the player feel as if he really is operating.

The designer of Microsurgeon, Rick Levine, has designed one other game—Truckin'—for play on the Intellivision. I haven't had a chance to play it very much, but, like Microsurgeon, it's highly imaginative and the first of its kind.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Educational
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	A

NIGHT STALKER™/by Mattel Electronics

Night Stalker makes a good game to play on Halloween and any other time you want to be scared, because it has bats, cobwebs, a spider, and, for that modern touch, an evil robot who shoots Night Stalker on sight. The tempo, like Asteroids, is an eerie sort of beat ("bom—bom—bom—bom"), making it even more suspenseful.

The graphics in Night Stalker are super! The bat looks like a bat, the spider looks like a spider, and even the robot looks real. But the best graphic is the man, Night Stalker. The graphics are so detailed that when Night Stalker runs he even bends his knees.

The controls in Night Stalker are simply awful, but that may be because I'm used to the Atari joysticks and not to the controls of the Intellivision. The disc moves the man, and the No. 2 button shoots up, the No. 4 button shoots left, the

No. 6 button shoots right, and the No. 8 button shoots down, which means the player has to look at the control pad to see which button to push. It's like patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time—confusing!

Night Stalker's defense is a gun loaded with six shots; however, the trick comes in getting the gun, which appears randomly in the maze when Night Stalker is out of bullets. Each time Night Stalker gets it, he is given six more shots. When Night Stalker is out of bullets, he has to get another gun.

After 5,000 points, a different robot appears. This one is more serious about his work. He moves faster, shoots on sight, and even chases Night Stalker into a dead end—ZAP! Also at this stage, when you shoot a bat, instead of its being replaced by another bat, it is replaced by another robot. After 15,000 points, a different robot appears. This one has a special shield that takes three shots to destroy, with a final fourth shot needed to kill the robot. Different robots appear at scores of 5,000, 15,000, 30,000, and 80,000. The hardest robot of them all appears after 80,000 points. This robot is dedicated to his mission to destroy Night Stalker. What makes this robot so difficult is that he's invisible. That's right! Invisible! His bullets are your only clue to where he is.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Maze
Age Level	12 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B+

RIVER RAID™/by Activision

I reviewed River Raid for the Atari 2600 when it was first released. For story line details and a description of the game play, see Chapter 1. Almost one million games of it were sold in that first version making it one of the bestselling home video games.

In the Intellivision version, players may set the game to begin at Bridge 1, Bridge 5, Bridge 20, or Bridge 50, making it a more challenging game for the experienced player. Another major difference is that the pilot may fly over land, but not where there are trees. Hitting a tree, naturally, causes the jet to crash. In the Atari 2600 version the pilot is unable to fly over the land. Apparently the plane is flying so low it crashes into the bank.

Although the Intellivision adaption done by Peter Kaminski is superb, some games are just meant for the 2600, as some games are just meant for the Intellivision. The joystick controller on the 2600 makes the plane easier to control and gives the player more of the feeling of being a jet-fighter pilot. I'm glad that in the Intellivision version the player is allowed to fly over land free from trees, because controlling is more difficult with the disk controller and the pilot needs a little more freedom to maneuver! I'd forever be crashing into the bank otherwise!

If you have both the Intellivision and the Atari 2600, I'd select the 2600 version; however, if you have only the Intellivision, you still can't go wrong with River Raid if you enjoy shoot-'em-up games.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	C
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A–

SHARK! SHARK!™/by Mattel Electronics

What would it be like to be a small fish inside an ocean filled with many dangers, such as fish larger than you, crabs, lobsters, jellyfish, sea horses, and the most fearsome foe of all —the shark? Mattel Electronics has answered this question with Shark! Shark!

In Shark! Shark! the player controls a small fish in an ocean full of other fish—some larger than the player's and some smaller—with the smaller ones usually falling "dinner" to the larger ones.

Large fish, however, aren't the only things for a small fish to avoid. A black shark lurks in the ocean in search of prey. Crabs, lobsters, sea horses, and jellyfish are also dangers. The player has a defense against the shark. By nibbling on its tail, the player can wound and soon kill the shark. The number of nibbles it takes to kill the shark depends on how large the player's fish is.

Killing a shark is not as easy as it sounds. If the player touches any part of the shark except the tail, it's "bye-bye" fishy! It takes a bit of practice to kill a shark because he's quick and can turn on the player.

The player's only defense against the other dangers is size. The larger the player's fish, the more he can eat. The player

starts the game at fish size one, which means he can eat all the fish the size of zero or one. For every 1,000 points scored, the player's fish will grow one size larger, up to a maximum of fish size five.

For every 1,000 points scored after the fish has reached size five, the player will receive a reserve fish. The maximum number of reserve fish is 225! (My highest is 27.) At size four the player can eat crabs or lobsters, and at size three, sea horses. Nothing can eat a jellyfish except the shark.

The graphics in this game are exceptionally good. The fish swim along in a clear blue ocean. The bottom of the ocean is lined with seaweed and other plants. Occasionally, bubbles will come from a hole in the bottom of the ocean and float to the top gracefully, just as if they were real bubbles.

The sounds in this game are unbelievable! When a shark appears on the screen, there is a sound of dread and doom. It's such a good effect that it makes me think that a shark is actually in my room. Also, there are many slurshing and gurgling sounds. The neatest tune comes when the game is over.

In the two-player version of the game, the players play at the same time. They can play together as a team (my mom's preference) or ruthlessly eat their opponents (my preference). GULP!

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

SWORDS AND SERPENTS™/by Imagic

The player in Imagic's Swords and Serpents is the Warrior Prince who must recapture his family's castle from the Sinister Serpent. He recaptures the castle by avoiding the Serpent's warriors and finding and acquiring different magic spells in four different maze levels.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Adventure
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Hard to Very Hard
Overall Rating	A+

TROPICAL TROUBLE™/by Imagic

In Imagic's game Tropical Trouble, sequel to Beauty and the Beast, the player is Clarence, who must save his girl from the beastly claws of the Beach Bruiser. He saves her after running through the whole tropical island while avoiding boulders, snakes, coconuts, clams, ferns, and lava.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Action
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B+

TRUCKIN'™/by Imagic

In Truckin' by Imagic the player must drive a truck to the four corners of the U.S.A. while delivering goods on a tight schedule. The player chooses which cargoes to carry, where to deliver them, and what routes to take. Truckin' is the first of a series Imagic calls Edu-Tainment—a mixture of education and entertainment. The game teaches where the major interstates and cities are located.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	B
Type	Driving/Educational
Age Level	Under 10
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B+

5

Odyssey²: Cousin to the First System

The first home video game system to be patented was Odyssey. The year was 1972, and the system was named Odyssey 100. In 1978 Magnavox introduced Odyssey², which came out about the same time as the Atari VCS (2600) and Bally systems. The Atari VCS soon became the most popular system, outselling the Bally and the Odyssey².

The Odyssey² is a gray-colored, lightweight game system with an alphanumerical keyboard and two permanently installed controllers. The keyboard is arranged typewriter style, but the keys are not raised. Since the keys are flush with the surface, it makes it more difficult to use. To keep from making mistakes, the player has to look at the keyboard. Nevertheless, the keyboard is one of the greatest features of the system. It allows the player to type in his name on games, and it's also used in certain games such as Sid the Spellbinder to type in words.

The graphics of the Odyssey² are extremely limited. Game play on most of the games is also limited. Thus, the

games look dull in comparison to games for other systems. However, some games like Pick Axe Pete and Freedom Fighter are well designed and will usually give the player hours of enjoyment.

Another good feature of the system is the voice expansion module. On those games which are marked Voice/Enhanced, if the player has the voice expansion module, he will hear words. If he doesn't have the module, he can still play the games but will hear only the electronic sounds. The words spoken can be clearly understood, but some of the phrases, such as "Come on, turkey, hit it," can become very annoying after a while. However, one great option for the player is to simply slide the volume control to off.

There are also games offering a combination of a board game with play on the Odyssey² system. Two such games are the Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt and Quest of the Rings. The games come beautifully boxed with a neat foldout game board, playing pieces, and record-keeping booklets.

ATLANTIS™/by Imagic

Atlantis was originally designed by Dennis Koble (designer of Atari's hand-held Touch Me and the Atari arcade Sprint I and II and Imagic's Trick Shot) for the Atari 2600. It received a nomination for "The 1982 Best Video Game of the Year" by *Electronic Games* magazine. It has also been adapted for the Intellivision and Odyssey².

From the title of this game, right away you can see that you are doomed! It is an impossible game to win, for Atlantis is an ancient civilization beneath the sea and has already met its watery grave! Just the same, it's fun to see how many points you can score before the city meets its fate.

Your mission is to defend this city against different types of Gorgon vessels. You must protect parts of the city, such as the People Pyramid, the Doomed Palace, and the Genera-

tor. The player protects the various parts by shooting diagonally left and diagonally right from sentry posts located to the left and right of the screen. A secret weapon, a Blitz Bomb which will disintegrate all Gorgon vessels on the screen, may be used when the action gets really tough!

Atlantis is the best game I've played on the Odyssey² because of its bright, colorful graphics and fast, challenging, and interesting game play. It flat out does not look like a typical game for the Odyssey².

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Atari Version	B
Graphics	A
Sound	C
Type	Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B+

DEMON ATTACK™/by Imagic

Demon Attack by Imagic caused quite a stir when it was first introduced for the Atari 2600. It won "The 1982 Best Video Game of the Year," an Arkie award given by *Electronic Games* magazine. The game was originally designed for the Atari 2600 by Rob Fulop (designer of Atari's Missile Command and Night Driver and Imagic's Cosmic Ark and Fathom). Then it was adapted for the Intellivision, then for the Atari computers, and now for the Odyssey².

In this game the player, who is marooned on the ice planet of Krybor, must shoot down screaming waves of demons before they get him. In later waves the demons split into two. The player begins with three bunkers, and a new one is

added each time the player survives a wave without getting hit.

There are ten variations to Demon Attack for the Odyssey². Three of the variations are tracing laser fire. An interesting one is a special cooperative version in which two players take turns every four seconds.

The game play in Demon Attack for the Atari 2600 and Odyssey² are almost the same. In the Atari 2600 version there are eighty-four waves. I know, because I survived all of them! I'm not sure if there are that many waves on the Odyssey² version, because I haven't made it that far. Also, in the Odyssey² version there aren't lasers coming down from the demons as there are in the 2600 version. The game is best played with the volume turned off, because the sounds are scratchy and can become very annoying.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Atari Version	B–
Graphics	B
Sound	D
Type	Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	C+

KILLER BEES™/by Odyssey

In Killer Bees (which has voice, if you have the voice module), the player controls a swarm of white bees that flies around, avoiding other swarms and killing alien Beebots. Beebots?!

When a Beebot is killed, he folds up and a marker that

looks like a gravestone takes its place. These markers are boundaries that the Beebots can't go through.

One feature of the game is a bug zapper that zaps the other swarms of bees. After many games of Killer Bees, I found out it's best to forget the bug zapper and concentrate on getting the Beebots.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	C
Originality	C
Graphics	C
Sound	A
Type	Action
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Very Hard
Overall Rating	C+

PICK AXE PETE™/by Odyssey

Deep in the gold-filled shafts of Misty Mountain Mine lies Pick Axe Pete, who picks away at every boulder he can see in the hope of finding gold! That's not a story about a gold-loving forty-niner, but it's the story line behind the game Pick Axe Pete, designed by Ed and Linda Averett.

In the game the player controls Pick Axe Pete through the multileveled series of seven shafts in Misty Mountain Mine. On the top, middle, and bottom shafts, there are three color-changing doors from which come Pick Axe Pete's bouncing foes—the boulders. The only way for Pick Axe Pete to reach the top of the shaft is to climb ladders which appear and disappear very quickly.

The player starts out with an axe, which lasts for only a very short time. With the axe in hand, Pick Axe Pete (the player) can hammer away at one of these bouncing boulders

and strike gold along with three points. After the axe disappears, the only way to get another one is to grab one that comes falling randomly when two boulders collide. When the player catches an axe, he receives five points. Without the axe, the player is almost defenseless against the boulders.

The only way the player can encounter a boulder without getting squashed is either to jump over a rolling boulder or to duck under a bouncing one. Doing this tricky maneuver will earn the player one point.

The key also plays an important part in this game. The key appears randomly when three boulders collide. When the player catches a key, he receives ten points, and he can go through any one of three doors. By going through a door, the player receives twenty points and is magically transported to a deeper, more difficult part of the mine.

After the game the player can take his final score and, by looking at the rating table inside the instruction booklet, he can find out how he rates. The rating table for Pick Axe Pete follows.

You've Struck Gold! (50–99 points)
You've Hit the Mother Lode! (100–249 points)
You're Living Rich! (250–399 points)
Buy the House on the Hill! (400–599 points)
Buy Texas! (600–799 points)
You Have Founded a Dynasty! (800+ points)

So far, I'm only living rich, but if you buy the house on the hill or you've founded a dynasty, please write me and let me know how you did it.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	A
Graphics	B
Sound	B
Type	Climbing
Age Level	All Ages

Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B+

TURTLES™/by Odyssey

At most of the hotels I've stayed at, the doorman greets his guests at the door, or the cashier says "Good morning, how are you?" But this hotel I'm going to describe is most unfriendly.

Fortunately, it isn't for real. It's Turtle Towers, in Odyssey²'s latest game, Turtles. The game can be played with or without the voice adapter on the Odyssey².

The player is a brave turtle who goes around saving little baby turtles. The game is played in a maze similar to the maze in Lady Bug by Coleco, but in Turtles there are hotel rooms. In each room there is a question mark that will turn into either a baby turtlet or an evil beetle. If a turtlet is found, it will climb on the back of the player's turtle and a house will randomly appear in one of the four corners.

The player then has to guide his turtle, carrying the turtlet, over to that house. Saving helpless turtlets isn't easy. Beetles (not the rock group) chase the player's turtle around the maze. The touch of one means instant death, but the player has three extra turtles per game. The longer it takes the player to rescue turtlets, the smarter the beetles become. So, beware!

The player's defense against these beetles is a bug bomb that appears in a little X. The turtle can place a bomb in the path of a beetle to de-bug him. The player starts the game with three bug bombs. To pick up more, the player must cross over a large flashing X at the center of the screen.

With some practice, anyone should make it to the second floor of Turtle Towers. If you do, try naming the tune, which is different from the music on the first floor.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	C
Sound	B
Type	Maze
Age Level	All Ages
Difficulty Level	Hard
Overall Rating	B

6

Vectrex: The Portable Arcade

The Vectrex is a portable video game system that uses its own monitor—no television is needed. This monitor uses vector graphic technology, which means it has graphics like the arcade games Scramble and Star Castle by Cinematronics that are made up of connected lines. Other game systems use graphics that are made up of little blocks.

Also, the Vectrex has a built-in game called Mine Storm, a switch that controls brightness, a removable arcade-type control panel, screen overlays that add color to the games, and some games that are even 3-D!

The fact that it has its own monitor, is portable, and takes only one plug makes it ideal for someone to take along inside a camper or van. It also could be a way for some lonely soul at summer camp to gain some extra friends. You can also buy a carrying case that holds the whole system (monitor and two control panels) and up to nine cartridges.

General Consumer Electronics, a division of Milton Brad-

ley Company, makes this system and over twenty games for it. Some of the game titles are Batter-Up (Action Baseball), Spinball (Pinball), Heads-Up (Action Soccer), Pole Position, Fortress of Narzod, Star Castle, and Web Wars.

ARMOR ATTACK™/by General Consumer Electronics

A jeep makes its way through the streets and alleys of a bombed-out town, watching for enemy tanks that are behind buildings with the mission to seek and destroy. No place seems safe from the treacherous enemy. No, this isn't a scene from the movie *Patton,* but the story line behind Armor Attack, licensed from Cinematronics, makers of the arcade game.

In Armor Attack the player controls a jeep by using the joystick and buttons one and two to fine-tune his movements. The third button will apply thrust, and the fourth one fires a missile.

At the start of the game the player's jeep will appear in the center of the town. Once the player is in range of an enemy tank he fires a missile, and if it hits the tank, it will dismantle it, but it takes a second shot to destroy it. As the player destroys tanks, additional ones will be dispatched, followed by missile-firing helicopters. There is no hiding place from this evil chopper. The player's only chance for survival is to hit it first. A word of advice: when a helicopter arrives on the scene, move away from the aim of the tanks' fire and concentrate on the chopper.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	B
Graphics	B

Sound	A
Type	Combat/Maze
Age Level	9 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B

ART MASTER™ and LIGHT PEN™/by General Consumer Electronics

An exciting accessory for the Vectrex is the Light Pen. Included with it is the Art Master cartridge. The Light Pen looks like a fat ink pen with a coiled cord attached. Unlike a conventional pen, your Light Pen creations appear on the screen instead of on paper. The Pen is plugged into the left outlet on the front of the Vectrex, the same outlet used for a second control panel. Then the Art Master cartridge is inserted into the system.

The game menu (choices) includes Sketch, Connect, and Animate. The player points the Light Pen at the desired function such as Sketch. To draw virtually anything, the player then aims the Pen at the "+" (cursor) on the screen and presses and holds down Button 1 on the Control Panel. A fantastic option called "Strrrretch Your Imagination" can be seen by pressing and holding down Button 2 and moving the Light Pen around the screen. The line you are drawing can be stretched and pulled in all different directions like a rubber band! Fans, cosmic explosions, stars, flower tops—you name it—can be created by pressing and holding down Button 4. Anytime the player wants to erase any of his "mistakes" or creations, he simply points the Light Pen at the word Erase and presses and holds down Button 4.

The Connect choice on the menu is an art experience! Your drawing appears as dots, which are connected by pushing Button 4. The best, however, is the last selection on the menu, Animate. This has to be seen to be believed! The artist draws one figure or object and then has up to nine

frames to make changes to show animation. The animation can be speeded up or put in slow motion by pressing the appropriate buttons.

Very young children who use the Light Pen may at first need help in knowing which of the four buttons to push at the right time. It takes about an hour to really get the hang of it—maybe a little longer for the Animate selection. The best way to learn is to take turns with another person, one reading the instructions while the other creates with the Pen.

Other cartridges available for use with the Light Pen are Melody Master, Mail Plane (described as a combination game and geography lesson), and AnimAction (advanced animation). I haven't played these cartridges yet, but I can hardly wait to, because if they're anything like Art Master, it will mean hours of endless imagination and creation. The only disadvantage is that there's no way to save your creations. I wouldn't be surprised, however, if in the near future they think of a way to do that, too!

COSMIC CHASM™/by General Consumer Electronics

In Cosmic Chasm the player tries to save the galaxy by blowing up the alien-inhabited planet. The player blows up the planet by battling his way to the center, releasing a super bomb, and (hopefully) getting out before it blows up. Sound easy? Well, let me tell you this—it isn't!

First, the player will be shown a map of the planet, including its underground caverns and passageways. A blinking light will indicate the cavern where the player will enter the planet. He must use some strategy and determine the quickest path to the center. By using the joystick to maneuver the spaceship, the third button to thrust, and the fourth one to fire dual lasers, the player quickly destroys all the Planet Protectors before the center part of the cavern grows too

big and crushes the player's ship. Wait, that's not all! After destroying all the Planet Protectors in a cavern, the player must move his ship over to the appropriate exit and, while inching up to it, press the first button (drill button) in order to get past the force field. However, if the player moves too fast, his ship will be destroyed.

After clearing a path to the center chamber, the player must first fight off Planet Protectors and then move as close to the middle as possible, drop the bomb load by moving the joystick in a backward S motion, and then exit the entire planet within fifteen seconds. Then off to mission two!

Cosmic Chasm is one of the toughest games I've played. After several days of playing, I've only gotten to mission two once. Actually, it's the same as the first mission, but by no means any easier . . .

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Originality	B
Graphics	B
Sound	A
Type	Space/Maze
Age Level	10 and up
Difficulty Level	Hard to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B+

HYPERCHASE AUTO RACE™/by General Consumer Electronics

While the lights are changing from red to yellow to green, the ever-familiar words are being spoken: "Gentlemen, start your engines!" "Brrumm! Brrumm! Rrrrrrr—screech!" Watch out for those guardrails, trees, poles, and canyon

walls, for the "3-D arcade experience" has just been brought home with Vectrex's HyperChase Auto Race.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Originality	B
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Driving
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Very Hard
Overall Rating	B+

POLE POSITION™/by General Consumer Electronics

Up until now, with the exception of a few games, the graphics for the Vectrex have been "different"—hard to judge, with nothing to compare them to. However, General Consumer Electronics has just put an end to that with Pole Position, the arcade game by Atari engineered and licensed by Namco.

As the game begins, the player will find himself at the starting line of the world-famous Fuji Speedway in Japan. The words "prepare to qualify" will float across the screen, and the roar of the engines will be heard.

Once the sounds start, the player should press button three or four to start and accelerate the engines for a qualifying lap. The player switches gears by pressing buttons one and two and steers the car by using the joystick. During the qualifying lap, as well as during the race, the player must avoid other cars and dangerous obstacles on the road. If the player qualifies for one of the four exclusive starting positions, then the challenge continues into four successive laps

as the player races to maintain his position and complete laps in shorter time spans.

Although the player has an unlimited number of cars, he will lose a great deal of time if he crashes with another car or an obstacle such as a billboard. It is possible to drive off the speedway track, but doing so slows down the car as well as increases the chances of losing a car.

The graphics in Pole Position are super! Although they are vector graphics, they almost look raster-scan, such as seen on the Atari or other game systems. Also, the mountains are included from the arcade game. Japan's enormous Mount Fuji can also be seen on the horizon.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Closeness to Arcade	B
Graphics	A+
Sound	A+
Type	Racing/Action
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	A

SCRAMBLE™/by General Consumer Electronics

It's time to scramble in Scramble a version of the arcade game by Cinematronics. While on a mission to destroy the enemy base, the player avoids mountain peaks, enemy rockets, UFOs, and flamoids. After encountering a city, the player maneuvers through a maze. After the maze comes the enemy base. However, very few people have made it to the base, let alone destroyed it.

REPORT CARD

Game Play	A
Closeness to Arcade	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Type	Defender
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Hard
Overall Rating	A

SPIKE™/by General Consumer Electronics

"Spike speaks!" says an advertisement on the Spike game box. And speak Spike does! All sorts of words. Even his girlfriend, Molly, talks! They have conversations like "Eek, help, Spike!" and "Oh no, Molly!" and when Spike messes up he comes out with a loud "Darn it!"

One might ask "Why does Molly need help?" and "How does Spike mess up?" Well, when the dastardly villain, Spud, kidnaps Molly and takes her to his secret hideout, Molly screams to Spike for help. Spike, the player, must maneuver through treacherous obstacles and avoid dangerous creatures that are scattered along the way to Spud's hideout to rescue Molly.

The obstacles are three moving catwalks. Spike must get to the top of the screen by jumping on catwalks and climbing ladders to higher ones, all the while looking for a large key. When Spike has found the key and is on the top catwalk, he must jump on top of the cage where Molly is being held. The cage will open, and Spike and Molly will live happily ever after—until Spud strikes again . . . "Oh no!"

If at any time while on a catwalk Spike should happen to

fall off or come in contact with a Bouncer or a Bird (later levels), then Spike will lose one chance to save Molly, and he will scream a loud "Darn it"!

The voice in Spike does not require any kind of add-on special device, but the voice is not all that great. It is however, understandable.

The theme of saving a kidnapped love has been overworked greatly by all arcade and home games, but Spike is the first to bear this theme for the Vectrex. However, the game play is too repetitious, and it is just plain too simple.

Just the same, the game has proven that the Vectrex system is sophisticated enough to be able to have voice without a special device. Now maybe they can add voice to games like Blitz football ("hut one, hut two"), Heads-Up soccer ("Goal!"), or, better yet, Star Trek The Motion Picture ("Captain, welcome aboard!").

REPORT CARD

Game Play	C
Originality	C
Graphics	A
Sound	B
Type	Climbing
Age Level	6 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	C+

STAR TREK THE MOTION PICTURE™/by General Consumer Electronics

In the game Star Trek The Motion Picture, the player is Captain Kirk, whose mission is to seek out and destroy the Klingon Mothership. Nine levels of space, black holes, Klingon fighter ships, Romulans, and space stations make

Star Trek The Motion Picture a game you'll be "welcome aboard on."

REPORT CARD

Game Play	B
Closeness to Arcade	C
Graphics	B
Sound	B
Type	First-Person Shoot-'Em-Up
Age Level	8 and up
Difficulty Level	Medium to Hard
Overall Rating	B

PART II

Tips for Playing and Buying Video Games

7

Fun with Video Games

Hosting a Home Video Game Tournament

What can you do when it's raining buckets outside and there's nothing good on television? Simple. Have a home video game tournament. No matter what system you own, you can have loads of fun and make money at the same time. Here's how.

Step one is to buy some prizes. It won't be hard to find small items related to video games, such as how-to-play paperbacks, Pac-Man pencils, notebooks, score pads, candy bars, and so forth.

Step two is to choose a game for your tournament. If you find one that is similar to an arcade game, later on the top winners can compete on a full-size game at a local arcade. It doesn't have to be the exact game. For example, you could substitute Apollo's Shark Attack for Atari's Pac-Man; Intellivision's Space Armada or Imagic's Demon Attack for Space

Invaders. You might want to try out some of the latest home games such as Ms. Pac-Man or Donkey Kong Junior.

Step three is to decide on refreshments—cookies, candy, popcorn, and punch are fine. Hint: beg your mom to make Pac-Man sugar cookies or do it yourself. They're simple to make. To keep things running smoothly on tournament day, it's a good idea to bake them the day before.

Here's the recipe my mom likes best. It's from Wilton Enterprises, manufacturer of cake-decorating products.

VANILLA SUGAR COOKIES

1/2 cup butter or margarine
1/2 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 3/4 cups flour

Preheat oven to 400°

In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar with an electric mixer. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Add baking powder and flour one cup at a time, mixing after each addition. The dough will be very stiff. It may be necessary to blend the last flour in by hand. DO NOT CHILL DOUGH.

BAKING INSTRUCTIONS: Divide dough into two balls. On a floured surface, roll each ball into a circle approximately 12" in diameter. Dough should be 1/8" thick. Dip cookie cutters in flour before each use. Pick up dough from around cut cookies. Place cookies onto ungreased cookie sheet with a spatula dipped in flour.

Bake on top rack of oven for 6–7 minutes until cookies are light brown. Remove cookies from sheet immediately after taking from oven. Makes approximately 20 cookies.

The only thing different from this recipe that my mom does is to use powdered sugar to dip the cookie in, and she rolls the dough out on a powdered sugar surface. She also uses her shiniest cookie sheets, which makes the cookies bake evenly.

If you want the cookies to be yellow for Pac-Man, put yellow food dye in the cookie mixture while it is still creamy, or you can frost the cookies with yellow icing. Use a round cookie cutter or doughnut cutter to make circle shapes out of the rolled-out dough. Then cut slices out of each circle (a slice like you would see in a pie or pizza).

Put them in the oven, and after they're done make an eye out of a raisin, or add lashes and a bow made of icing for Ms. Pac-Man, and—yum, yum! Come to think of it, you had best make up two batches so that you'll have some left for your tournament.

If you're playing a Frogger tournament, you might want to use a frog-shaped cookie cutter; or use stars for a space game; or decorate gingerbread men for Berzerk. Let your imagination run wild!

Step four is to make a list of expenses, such as the cost for the prizes, refreshments, game rental (if you rent the cartridge), and last—but not least—your time. Charge the kids an admission fee, enough to cover your expenses and to make some money for yourself. For example, say your expenses add up to $7.50 and you invite seven kids. Make the admission fee $1.50 and, after paying your expenses, you make $3.00. Good-bye lemonade stand!

Step five is to invite the kids. Be sure to tell them to bring the admission fee!

Step six is to make a sign listing all the rules and to post it. You don't want your tournament turning into a riot! However, you can add a touch of humor to your sign. Mine read:

NO

1. Food, drinks, or gum in play area (the living room)

2. Coaching
3. Misbehaving
4. Profanity

OR

Talking during tournament.

Violators will be . . . beaten, shot, stabbed, and trampled on . . . survivors will be sent home!

Step seven is greeting the kids, explaining the rules, and giving each one a five-minute practice time. You don't have to wait for everyone to get there to start the practice session. The most important thing is that everyone has the same amount of time. Set a timer to make it fair. The practice session for eight kids will take about an hour.

Step eight is the intermission/refreshment break. Everyone flexes the muscles, relaxes, eats, drinks, and otherwise prepares for the real thing. During this time have each kid draw a number to determine the order of play in the tournament.

Step nine is the tournament play, during which everyone takes a turn on the game. Be sure to record scores. If kids tie on a score, have them play a second game. The tournament play should last about an hour.

Step ten is to award the prizes. To make it simple, the kid who comes in first picks first and so on down the line. I usually have two top prizes and then different types of candy bars for the other prizes. At my last tournament everyone won something.

Step eleven is to send everyone home as quickly as you can before your mom loses her cool and to clean up any messes. You want your mom to be in a good mood so that she'll let you have another tournament sometime soon.

Now, what can you do when the weather's miserable and there's nothing good on television? Right. Have a home video game tournament. But you say you don't *have* a game

system? Then on this day make a list of all the things you can do to earn money to buy one—rake leaves, gather and sell pecans (that's what I did), baby-sit, collect aluminum cans, and so on.

Halloween II—Video Game Treats

Last Halloween, I recommended having a safe video game party at home instead of going door-to-door trick-or-treating. One scary video game I suggested was Mattel's Night Stalker for play on the Intellivision. It has all the elements—bats, cobwebs, a spider, an evil robot, and eerie, suspenseful sounds.

Another game I suggested for the Intellivision is Imagic's Demon Attack. The whole idea of this game is just plain survival—surviving the relentless waves of demons attacking the player's ship on the moon. Make it through every third wave and you are greeted by the Demon Base with all its red-hot fury and anger.

In Halloween II, a sequel to last year's suggestions, I'm recommending four more games for play, not only on the Intellivision, but also for play on the Atari 2600 and Atari computers.

For Atari 2600 owners, there are Frankenstein's Monster made by Data Age and Ghost Manor by Xonox, one of two games on Xonox's first double-ender cartridge.

The object of Frankenstein's Monster is to build a wall around the monster to prevent him from escaping from the castle. Ghosts, spiders, cobwebs, trapdoors, an acid pit, and bats make it tough for the player to stop him.

If that's not chilling enough for you, try Ghost Manor, where skeletons, ghosts, bats, knights, skulls, scorpions, mummies with axes, and the bloodthirsty Dracula try to keep the player from saving the girl from the prison on the top floor of the manor. Before the player can even get a glimpse of the manor, he must first make it through a graveyard.

For Atari computer owners there's CBS Software's Mountain King. It doesn't exactly have the story line of a Halloween tale, but it's just as frightening. Imagine yourself in a dark diamond mine with bats, a giant killer spider, a spirit, and a skull spirit, and you armed with only a flashlight. As you can see, it has all the right ingredients and even suspenseful music, which adds to the game.

Come the night of ghosts, goblins, and zombies, Intellivision owners will for sure want this classic game by Imagic in their game library—Dracula! Designed by Alan Smith, it's a neck tingler!

The player assumes the role of Drac, who must be kept alive by biting his nightly supply of people for blood before the sun rises.

The detailed graphics are superb! Dark and stormy nights with bolts of lightning and puddles of water, eyes peering out from darkened windows of apartments, a tomb in a graveyard from which Drac emerges—I mean what else could we want from a game for Halloween?

Ahh! I forgot one thing—sounds! Eerie organ music and the crackle of thunder give it that perfect scary touch! Oh yes, there's one more thing in this game—a zombie!

Now that you know what games to play, put on your Dracula costume and invite all your "monsters" over. But make sure you have plenty of refreshments. Spooky costumes and games aren't the only things someone expects at a Halloween party.

The VID Kid Quiz

Like most kids, I figure my schoolteachers sit up late at night dreaming up quizzes to torture their poor students. Just for fun, I decided to turn the tables and make up a test for students to spring on teachers. Of course, the teachers will be in for a real hard time if they have trouble with the spelling and want to "look it up in the dictionary."

OK, class, sharpen your pencils and concentrate.

INSTRUCTIONS

Fill in the blanks with the correct letters or numbers. Remember, spelling counts.

1. The first software-only company to make games for the Atari 2600 is _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _. (10 letters)
2. River Raid by Activision was designed by _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _. (2 words, 9 letters)
3. The snake in Q*bert is called _ _ _ _ _. (5 letters)
4. This helmet-wearing character, named _ _ _ _ _ _, destroys monsters by blowing them up with a pump or dropping rocks on them. (2 words, 6 letters)
5. Coleco's _ _ _ _ _ _ system plays Atari 2600 compatible games. (6 letters)
6. In this game Chef Peter Pepper must build a _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _. (9 letters)
7. The first home game to be made into an arcade game is Data Age's _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _. (2 words, 13 letters)
8. In _ _ _ _ _ _! by Activision a mad bomber drops bombs. (6 letters)
9. In ColecoVision's _ _ _ _ _ _ _ the player avoids evil beetles. (2 words, 7 letters)
10. A _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ is used to draw on the screen of the Vectrex. (2 words, 8 letters)
11. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ is considered by many to be "The Father of Video Games." (2 words, 13 letters)
12. Each wafer in the Atari 2600 version of Pac-Man is worth _ _ _ point(s). (spell out the number)
13. In Odyssey's _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ the player picks away at every boulder in hopes of finding gold. (3 words, 11 letters)
14. The two initials secretly placed in Atari's Missile Command for the 2600 are _ and _.

15. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ designed the Atari 2600 version of Imagic's Demon Attack. (2 words, 8 letters)

16. In Mattel's _ _ _ _ _! _ _ _ _ _! the player starts out as a small fish in an ocean filled with many dangers. (2 words, 10 letters)

17. Starpath's Supercharger requires a _ _ _ _ . _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _. (2 words, 12 letters)

18. A person can try out many different games for the Atari 2600 without buying them if he subscribes to Gameline and owns an Atari 2600 compatible system and a _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _. (9 letters)

19. The portable game system _ _ _ _ _ _ _ uses vector graphic technology. (7 letters)

20. The object of CBS's Wizard of Wor is to destroy _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _. (8 letters)

P.S. Your answers will be in alphabetical order if you answered them correctly.

(Answers on the next page)

ANSWERS TO THE VID KID QUIZ

1. *Activision*
2. *Carol Shaw*
3. *Coily*
4. *Dig Dug*
5. *Gemini*
6. *hamburger*
7. *Journey Escape*
8. *Kaboom!*
9. *Lady Bug*
10. *Light Pen*
11. *Nolan Bushnell*
12. *one*
13. *Pick Axe Pete*
14. *R.F.*
15. *Rob Fulop*
16. *Shark! Shark!*
17. *tape recorder*
18. *telephone*
19. *Vectrex*
20. *worlings*

RATE YOURSELF!

18–20	correct	—A Video Whiz!	
15–17	"	—A Video Nut!	
12–14	"	—A Video-Ocre!	(Just mediocre—do some more playing!)
11 and below	"	—A Video-It!	(Put up the joysticks and read the book!)

" 'Twas the Night Before Pac-Man"

" 'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house
Everyone was stirring, even the mouse.
The stockings were hung on the doorknobs with care,
In hopes that jolly old Santa soon would be there.
My sister was shuttled off to her bed,
So that visions of video games might dance in her head,
And my folks in their pj's and I in the same,
Had just settled down for a Pac-Man game.
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I threw down my joystick to see what was the matter.
Away to the door I flew like a flash,
And fell hitting my head with a crash.
The moon shining on the new-fallen snow,
Gave an unreal glow to objects below,
When, what to my unbelieving eyes should appear,
But four tiny blobs and a yellow smear
Going "Waca, Waca, Waca" so lively and quick,
With that sound I knew it wasn't St. Nick.
Faster than Space Invaders they came.
And I whistled and shouted and called them by name:
"Hey Shadow! Hey Speedy! Hey Bashful and Pokey!"
Or is it Pinky? Inky? Clyde or Blinky?
To the top of the porch, to the top of my head
Through the door and inside the house they fled.
As quick as Imagic's Demons that fly,
When they meet with missiles and mount to the sky,
As fast as the bombs in Kaboom! they flew
Chasing Pac-Man and my folks, too.
Then, I heard inside the house
The cries of my folks and even the mouse.
As I drew in my head and was turning around,
My hero, Pac-Man, came with a bound.
He was dressed all in yellow, from his head to his toe,

Running after those monsters with a mighty blow.
Down the halls like narrow tunnels he ran so far
Turning corners till he found my vitamin jar,
Stopping just long enough to gobble a pill,
He then ambushed those monsters giving me a thrill!
From room to room he ran, sacking up in the drapes
Cherries, strawberries, peaches, apples, and grapes.
He was just going for the bells when I heard the sound
Of a million or more clangs all around.
Then, in a flash instead of yellow I saw red,
And I laughed, for before my eyes with a twist of his head
And a wink of his eye, I saw a right jolly old elf.
I knew I had nothing to dread in spite of myself.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work
And filled all the stockings with games like Berzerk,
Frogger, Donkey Kong, Cosmic Ark, Smurf, and Grand Prix.
And then giving a nod, out the door he did flee.
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew as fast as a missile.
But I heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight,
"A Happy Video Christmas to All and to All a Good Night."

I hope you enjoyed my modernized version of one of my favorite Christmas poems. My wish for you each Christmas season is that your heart be filled with peace, love, and joy.

Stardust

While flying to another galaxy to deliver medical supplies, Captain Irata's G.S.U. Starcruiser, named the USS *Cigami*, is suddenly and unexpectedly hit by a large meteorite and is forced to try to land on an unexplored planet named Yessydo.

However, two lettam (space talk for ten minutes) away

from the planet, the USS *Cigami* encounters a storm of stardust. According to the computer, each speck of stardust has enough atomic energy to blow Captain Irata's G.S.U. Starcruiser into cosmic ash.

After barely surviving the storm of stardust, the Starcruiser descends into the planet's atmosphere. Captain Irata finds several cities, defense bases, and a landing pad at the far corner of the planet.

That's the story line behind the new coin-op game Stardust, designed and manufactured by Loof Lirpa Electronics. The object of the game is to survive wave after wave of stardust and the defenses of the planet's cities while racking up as many points as possible.

At the start of the game the player maneuvers the USS *Cigami* through a storm of indestructible specks of stardust. Each speck of stardust (about twenty in all) moves in a different direction. Using tactics and controls like in the game Asteroids, the player moves his cruiser through this mess of specks. If his cruiser should hit any of the stardust, parts of the ship are lost and can be regained only by reaching certain score levels.

Once the storm of stardust has been survived, the USS *Cigami* is in the atmosphere of the planet (Level 2). On this part of the planet, there are defense bases and different-size cities. The player directs the Starcruiser using controls like in the game Scramble. The player uses the laser button to shoot down flying enemies and the bomb button to destroy the bases and cities.

After all of the defense bases and cities have been destroyed, the USS *Cigami* comes within battling range with the master base (Level 3). The base's many quick-firing lasers and heat-seeking missiles make it almost impossible for any video master to destroy it. I didn't make it past this level, but maybe you can.

If you have difficulty finding Stardust in your local arcade, or any arcade, I'm not surprised . . . It doesn't exist! APRIL FOOL!!!

NOTE Next time your assignment is to write an imaginative story for your English class, why not try your hand at a description of a make-believe video game? If you're not good at making up names, try using anagrams, that is, rearranging letters in words. The anagrams in this story are: Irata—Atari; Cigami—Imagic; G.S.U.—U.S.G. (Games); Loof Lirpa—April Fool; Yessydo—Odyssey; Lettam—Mattel.

Secret Messages in Games

Many people score millions of points on their home video games, learn the game inside out and backward, play the game for an hour a day for months and months, and never even think the game might have a secret message.

This secret message is usually the designer's name or initials and is almost never mentioned in the game's instructions—thus leaving the player the job of finding the secret for himself.

Probably the most well-known secret message is the one found in Atari's Adventure for the 2600 VCS. The "Adventure message" is displayed in a room that is frequently called the "programmer's room." The player finds the programmer's room by first getting a small dot that is found in the black castle. Next he gets any two objects and places them next to the barrier on the left side of the great corridor. He then travels to the right side of the great corridor, still holding the small dot.

The player must now hold his breath because, if he did everything just right, he can unrealistically pass through the barrier on the right side and—behold!—in flashing letters is the full name of Adventure's programmer. To find out his name, play the game.

Before leaving Atari and moving to Imagic, Rob "Demon Attack" Fulop placed a secret message in his Missile Command for the Atari 2600 VCS. When the player has finished on Game 13, if he did not score any points, the initials "R.F." will appear on the top of the right-most city.

Initials are also found in another game for the 2600 VCS. In Yar's Revenge, during an explosion after hitting a swirl in midair, the player must place the Yar on the line that appears where the swirl was shot. When the explosion is gone, the letters "H.S.W.W.S.H." will appear on the screen. They are the initials of the programmer—Howard Scott Warshaw!

Atari isn't the only company that puts secret things in its games. On the left shoulder right above the heart in Imagic's Microsurgeon is the name "Rick," the first name of the designer—Rick Levine.

Another secret message by Rick Levine appears in Imagic's Truckin' for Intellivision. The secret message shows up when the player turns his truck onto a road near San Jose, California. The initials "R.L." appear on the top right-hand corner of the screen. Following the initials is an Imagic billboard that stands alongside the road.

Now these games aren't the only ones that have secret messages in them. In fact, there a lot of games that have secret messages in them. The trouble is that they just haven't been found yet. Discovering them can give you the feeling of being like Matthew Broderick, star of the movie *Wargames*, when he tapped into the U.S. missile defense system.

In a recent interview, Howard Scott Warshaw said that he has put little Yars in other games for Atari: E.T. and Raiders of the Lost Ark. I've looked for them, but I haven't found them yet. Let me know if you have or if you find any messages in other games.

How Game Cartridges Are Made

Several people have asked me this question: "How are game cartridges made?" My little sister even asked, "Did God make them?"

"Sort of," I replied. I mean God made people, people made computers, and computers made the games.

But the computers don't do all the work—humans help. Here's how.

When I visited Games by Apollo in Richardson, Texas, and Imagic in Los Gatos, California, I had the chance to see how programmers make the games, the equipment they use, and the executive offices where game ideas are approved or disapproved.

At Apollo there is a little area in the office of the programmer's receptionist where they have an Atari VCS, an Intellivision, a TV, and every game cartridge made by Apollo and every other company for the Atari VCS and Intellivision. I mean there were stacks and stacks of cartridges—heaven for a video game nut! While waiting to meet the head game programmer, I was told to play any game I wanted. Naturally, with everyone watching, I chose an Apollo game.

At Imagic I was impressed with the tight security of the large room where the game designers work. Heavy metal doors secure the entrances to this room, and to get in a person has to have a special magnetic plastic card. You touch the card to a magnetic contraption on the wall and presto, the door unlocks. I felt like I was at the Pentagon, seeing top secret information.

In the design rooms a visitor will see all kinds of electronic equipment including the computers that only do what humans tell them to do. The programmers use an Atari 800 as their design machine. I was told at Apollo that they were in the process of getting a large main frame—a Data General which would support all of the programmers. The programs that are developed on the Atari 800 will not run on the Atari VCS because the systems are totally different; therefore, they have to have another machine—a converter. The converter downloads the program into a language that the Atari VCS can understand.

At Apollo, I interviewed Ed Salvo, head game designer, and asked him this question; "How are game 'carts' made?"

He began, "The average game takes somewhere in the neighborhood of three to five months to devise." When I asked him why it took so long, he replied, "Programming

takes time. You have to write the code and try it out and make sure it works—what we call debugging [the process of finding mistakes]. That takes some time . . . If one thing doesn't work you try something else . . . It's easy to say exactly what this is going to look like on paper, but when you put it on the screen it may not look right."

He said that the concept comes first [the idea of the game]. Ideas come from "just little things around you that trigger your craziness." For example, back in December, on his airplane trip home to Iowa after being interviewed for a programming job at Apollo, the plane stopped in St. Louis. He and his wife were sitting in the airport watching the baggage handler machine dropping suitcases all over the ground. It was his wife who suggested that it might be a good idea for a game. Ed Salvo said he then "embellished on that idea," and it became Lost Luggage.

At Apollo they also have brainstorming sessions during which their entire group of programmers tries to come up with one hundred ideas and then narrows them down to ten.

Step two is the developmental stage, which takes about a month. At this stage the programmer decides how the screen will look and how the player will score points. Colors and graphics are added, all to make the game extra special. They use 8 1/2" × 11" graph paper for drawing the graphics.

The actual programming of the graphics begins at step three. Some programmers use the assembly language, and some use the basic language, whichever the programmer prefers. Ed Salvo said, "We start with a base program to develop, and we start modifying it to add the screens onto it. The program code has to control the TV gun—electronic gun shooting across the screen—and you have to do that 60 times a second to make sure you draw 192 lines a screen and turn your gun off at the top so you can go to the next screen."

At Imagic this step differs a great deal. With a program called Draw 5, very similar to the Atari game Surround, the programmer, using simply a joystick, draws out the graphics.

Step four is writing the game itself—actually coding the

movement, the game play, the scoring, and all the different options.

In step five the programmer chooses the sounds and when they will appear. The programmer experiments with all different kinds of sounds for tunes he may use.

One of the last steps is downgrading the program through the converter and then into an EPROM (*E*rasable *P*rogrammable *R*ead *O*nly *M*emory) for the Atari VCS. They end up with the EPROM, which is a circular chip about a centimeter in diameter by a centimeter high. It can contain about thirty-two thousand bits of information. On that EPROM is the game. That's all there is to the game—the rest is housing (the black plastic case everyone sees).

The last step is the trial period, when Apollo tests the game for about a month with a few focus groups around the country. The focus groups write back what they think of the game. "If everything is favorable," said Ed Salvo, "the game goes into production."

Production? How do they make more EPROMS? How do they put the little EPROMS in the housing? Well, the plant manager of Apollo took me on a tour of the factory, and I saw how it's done, but that's another story.

Tips on Buying Games as Gifts

1. Know which system the person has. Games made for one system will not play on another one unless that system has a special adaptor. For example, Expansion Module #1 for the ColecoVision allows the person to play Atari 2600 compatible games.
2. Ask the person what game he wants. He may have his heart set on a specific one.
3. Keep interests in mind. Don't buy a sports game for an adventure/strategy lover, for example, unless he or she is also into sports.

General Tips on Buying Games

1. Buy the game at a store that gives you a demonstration. Take note of the *graphics:* Are they clean and realistic? To kids, good pictures can be almost as important as how the game plays. *Sounds:* Will they become annoying? *Game play:* Will it stay interesting? Look for a game that has several different scenes (or "screens" as they're called) so that it can be played many ways. *Difficulty level:* Will it continue to be challenging without becoming impossible?
2. Be careful when buying an arcade-to-home adaption. Don't expect it to be exactly like the arcade game. Chances are it won't be, but it still may be a good game.
3. Remember that a game for one system may be very different than the same game for another system, even though the games may have the same name. Make sure the version you want works on your system.

Choosing a Game for Dad

No matter what game system or computer you have, there's a game that should appeal to your dad. In choosing a game for him, think about his likes and dislikes. For example, my dad didn't get excited about video games—coin-op or home. But one Father's Day I won him over with Imagic's Trick Shot for the Atari 2600 VCS.

At the Abilene *Reporter News* in Texas I've gotten to know some fathers who like playing video games, and I've noticed they like a lot of different ones. An editor there who owns the Mattel Intellivision really likes Activision's Pitfall! (also available for the Atari VCS) and Mattel's Chess. On the other hand, a columnist for the *Reporter News* doesn't like leaping adventure games like Pitfall! He likes Activision's River Raid

for the Atari 2600 VCS. An owner of a local video specialty store I know likes Bally's Space Fortress for the Astrocade.

If I were buying a game for these men, I would think about the types of games they like. For example, after a year my dad still likes Trick Shot, a pool game. When picking a game for my dad, I would buy him a sports game like Mattel's Horse Racing or Atari's RealSports Soccer for the 5200.

If your dad enjoys Space Invaders type games, I'd recommend Imagic's No Escape for the 2600 VCS, Mattel's Astrosmash for the Intellivision, or Imagic's Demon Attack for the 2600 VCS, Intellivision, and Odyssey² systems.

For Defender type games, Telesy's Star Gunner for the 2600 VCS, Imagic's Nova Blast for the Intellivision, Odyssey's Freedom Fighters for the Odyssey², and Atari's Vanguard for the 5200 are all good.

For driving games, there's Activision's Enduro for the 2600 VCS, Atari's Pole Position for the 5200, and Coleco's Turbo for the ColecoVision. For the Intellivision, Imagic's Truckin' is the first of a series called Edu-Tainment. For kids it's considered education mixed with entertainment. Truckin' would be a good game for dads who enjoy "the road."

If your dad likes climbing games like Donkey Kong, I'd suggest Odyssey's Pick Axe Pete for the Odyssey², Data Age's Frankenstein's Monster for the 2600 VCS, and Atari's Kangaroo for the 5200.

If he's into adventure games, there are Imagic's Swords and Serpents for the Intellivision, Odyssey's Quest for the Rings for the Odyssey², and Coleco's Tunnels and Trolls for the ColecoVision.

For maze games, Atari's Ms. Pac-Man is the best for the 2600 VCS, and Atari's Pac-Man is the best for the 5200 (in my opinion). For the Intellivision there are Activision's Happy Trails and Mattel's Lock 'n' Chase.

Dads who like strategy games might like Odyssey's Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt for the Odyssey², Imagic's Microsurgeon for the Intellivision, and Imagic's Riddle of the Sphinx for the 2600 VCS.

Sports, I think, will please most fathers—that's why I'm listing more games in this category. There are Odyssey's Alpine Skiing and Computer Golf for the Odyssey² and Mattel's Major League Baseball and NBA Basketball for the Intellivision. For the Atari 2600 VCS, try Activision's Stampede for rodeo-loving dads. For the 5200, there's Atari's RealSports Tennis.

There are many, many more games just waiting for your dad and, of course, you to have some fun on Father's Day with.

8

Accessories

O'Sullivan's Game Cart

A useful accessory for Atari and Intellivision owners is O'Sullivan Industries' video game cart and TV stand, Model VG110. It's used for storing the game system and cartridges. The cart rolls out on casters and when not in use can be pushed back inside the stand. There are compartments on the top shelf which hold the different components of the game console. Beneath the top shelf is a drawer which may be used for storing cartridges. That's where I like to keep a score pad and pencil handy.

The fun part of getting an O'Sullivan cart is deciphering the two charts of instructions for assembling it. The charts unfold to about the size of a road map and are printed on both sides. In all, there are nineteen steps to follow.

When my dad dumped out the thousand and one pieces on the living room floor, he almost fainted. It was then that my mom decided she could put it together herself. She claims Dad never takes the time to read the directions.

The instructions are comical. They begin "Hi! I'm Larry Leisure and on behalf of O'Sullivan Industries, Inc., I want to thank you for buying an O'Sullivan product. You saved money by purchasing this unassembled unit. Now, save yourself some time and headaches by taking a few minutes to read these instructions before assembling your unit. I know you're anxious to get it put together . . . but relax, have a cup of coffee, and read these instructions first. You'll be glad you did!" They end by saying "Wasn't that fun and easy? Now, enjoy it!!"

My mom, who, my dad claims, would stand on her head if that's what the directions said to do, says putting the cart-TV stand together wasn't all that hard because the directions were easy to follow and had lots of pictures of the various parts like the runner stop, brackets, dowels, screws, and so on.

Eight cups of coffee later, Mom collapsed while I sat back and played my Atari. The very best thing about this cart is it keeps all the cords out of the way and everything nice and neat, which helps keep mothers in a better mood. Mom says that it is really worth the nineteen easy(?) steps plus the pot of coffee, but put this one together before Christmas Eve.

Starpath's Supercharger for the Atari 2600

The Supercharger for an Atari 2600 compatible system is a piece of hardware that increases memory, enhances graphic capabilities, and lengthens playing time of games. It looks somewhat like a typical game cartridge, and, in fact, it is inserted into the game cartridge slot of the system. That's where the similarity ends, because the game itself does not come on a cartridge but on a cassette tape. A cable from the Supercharger is then plugged into the earphone jack of a cassette tape recorder. Because the games are on cassette tape, they are approximately half the price of games on cartridges.

Three of my favorite Starpath games—Dragonstomper,

Escape from the Mindmaster, and Party Mix—are called Multi Load games. Multi Load games combine a series of games, all based on a single theme, onto one cassette. Each game (load) adds new characters, scoring objectives, and increasing levels of difficulty.

What's unique about the Multi Load game is that each load is challenging enough to be like a complete game for a beginner, but for the person who wants a real challenge, successive games can be attempted.

The WICO Joystick

A very practical gift item is a joystick. Not just any old joystick, but a WICO Command Control Joystick.

According to their advertising, "WICO is the world's largest designer and manufacturer of control devices for commercial arcade games. If you've ever played an arcade video game, chances are you used a WICO Joystick.

"All joysticks come equipped with an extra-long 5-foot cord for direct hookup with Atari, Sears, and Commodore home video games and computers. In addition, the joysticks may also be used with Odyssey (plug-in controls), Apple, Radio Shack, and Texas Instruments video games and home computers by utilizing the appropriate adaptor."

There are many styles of joysticks from which to choose, plus a trackball control. The one that I demo'ed is the WICO Command Control Joystick (model 15-9714). On it the player has a choice of using the fire button on the base or on the stick.

All of WICO's controls are backed by a one-year limited warranty. They're that confident! What makes me confident about them is that they're used to making controls for coin-op games, which I'm sure must take lots of abuse.

I've had my WICO Command Control Joystick for over a year and have not had one problem with it. Although I have tried various styles in WICO's line and even other companies' joysticks, this one is still my favorite. When I travel, it's

the first item packed in my suitcase. Recently I demonstrated some games at a department store in Virginia. Kids and adults who were invited to try out the games used my favorite joystick. I feel so confident that nothing or no one can harm it that I'll allow other people to use it.

WICO's Command Control Atari 5200 Analog Joystick

A great joystick for the Atari 5200 is WICO's Command Control Atari 5200 analog joystick. The joystick that comes with the Atari 5200 all-in-one controller is not self-centering. A joystick which is not self-centering will not automatically return to the center when it is released and makes some games frustrating to play.

Two advantages to the WICO Command Control are the Spring Return/Free Positioning modes (the joystick can be set to return automatically or to float free) and the Trim Controls, which allow the player to adjust cursor position for the most efficient use of Spring Return Mode.

The WICO Command Control, with two fire buttons on the base, connects to a Y-shaped cord adaptor (which comes with the joystick). The player uses the WICO joystick for control instead of the joystick on the Atari controller. The player also uses the fire buttons on the base of the WICO Command Control instead of the fire buttons on the Atari controller. The player uses the keypad of the Atari controller for all other functions.

If you are feeling frustrated with your Atari 5200 controller, WICO's Command Control Atari 5200 analog joystick is a solution.

PART III

Appendix

Alternatives to Buying Video Game Cartridges

Buying video game cartridges can be expensive. There are other choices for the person who would like to play more games on his system but perhaps can't afford to buy as many games as he'd like.

If you're an Atari 2600 owner or own any system that takes Atari 2600 cartridges, like ColecoVision's Expansion Module #1, another choice is Gameline, a division of Control Video Corp. To subscribe to Gameline, you'll need its Master Module, which retails for about sixty dollars, a telephone, and one of the major credit cards. The games will be charged to your parents' credit card at one dollar for about ten plays. Depending on how good you are at a game, you can play an hour or more—or even all day!

With Gameline you will receive a Master File, with instructions for all the games, and monthly issues of *Gameliner,* which give the latest titles and information about monthly contests. The September 1983 issue listed over sixty games from various companies!

Parents need not worry about the telephone being tied up, because the process of hooking up with Gameline takes less than a minute and the call is toll-free. Also, parents shouldn't be scared that their kids (or even that they) will run up a high bill on their credit card, because each person in the family can have his own weekly credit allowance—set by the parents, of course.

What's really exciting about Gameline is being able to enter your best scores and knowing right away how you rank across the nation with other Gameline players. For Gameliners, Control Video Corp. is planning some other exciting services, such as electronic mail, sports scores, news headlines, and stock market quotations.

You should be able to find Gameline in a retail store, but if you can't and would like more information, write Gameline Control Video Corp., 8620 Westwood Center Drive, Vienna, Virginia, 22180.

I'd also like to tell you about the Romox ECPC cartridge.

This cartridge is erasable and programmable, which means you can take it to one of Romox's terminal locations, which might be in a retail, drug, or toy store, and for a fee you can copy a game. A central computer keeps a number of games in memory and networks them to the terminal in the store. When you're tired of the game you have or have mastered it, then take it back to be erased and reprogrammed with a new game.

If you want more information about the Romox, you can write them at Romox Inc., 501 Vandell Way, Campbell, California, 95008.

The Activision Game Club

Most of the game companies want to know about your high scores, and they will usually give you recognition in their newsletters. Activision is the only company I know of that adds something really special to their recognition of high scorers—they send you game patches!

About thirty Activision games have clubs you can join by beating a score established by the Activision game designers. The patches are really neat! For instance, the clubs for the different sports games feature official-looking emblems, Starmaster features a main patch and different chevron-style patches you can add later, and the Freeway patch shows a chicken running along beneath the slogan "Save the Chicken Foundation." The patches are made even more eye-catching by the Activision "rainbow," which is cleverly worked into each design. I have a jacket just about covered with Activision patches, and people are always asking me questions about them.

Whenever you buy a game, look inside the box and find the instruction booklet. In each booklet you will find the required score for admission to that particular club. So, after some practice, you can take a picture of your qualifying score and send it, along with your name, age, and address (with zip code), to:

Activision Consumer Relations Department
Drawer No. 7287
Mountain View, California 94039

That's all there is to it! Activision will send you a letter of recognition and a patch.

If you have questions about the clubs, you can call Activision's toll-free number at 1-800-633-GAME if you live outside California, and 415-940-6044 (or 6045) if you live in California. If you call after 5:30 P.M. Pacific time, you'll hear a recording with the latest world-record scores for each club and also some bits of news about games that are in the making.

I believe Activision is really trying to show its customers how important they are and how much the company appreciates them. It makes me feel good to know *somebody* out there is thinking about them!

Activision Game Club Requirements

Here is a list of all the Activision clubs and the scores you will have to make on each game to qualify for membership and to receive a patch.

Activision Decathlon	8,600–8,999 (bronze patch) 9,000–9,999 (silver patch) 10,000 or more (gold patch)
Barnstorming	Game 1: below 33:30 (patch) Game 2: below 51:00 (patch) Game 3: below 54:00 (patch)
Beamrider	Sector 20 and 60,000 points (patch)
Chopper Command	10,000 and above (patch)—game 1
Crackpots	75,000 and above (patch)

Dolphin	80,000 and above (patch) Arrive at secret message (patch)
Dragster	Below 6.00 seconds (certificate and patch)
Dreadnaught Factor	5 dreadnaughts on level 4 or above (patch)
Enduro	5 days or more (patch)
Freeway	20 and above (patch)—games 3 or 7
Frostbite	40,000 and above (patch)
Grand Prix	Game 1: below 0:35 (patch) Game 2: below 1:00 (patch) Game 3: below 1:30 (patch) Game 4: below 2:30 (patch)
Happy Trails	40,000 and above (patch) (only for Mattel compatible consoles)
Ice Hockey	Beat the computer (patch)
Kaboom!	3,000 and above (patch)
Keystone Kapers	35,000 and above (patch)
Laser Blast	100,000 and above (patch) 1,000,000 (patch and stripe)
MegaMania	45,000 and above (patch)
Oink!	25,000 and above (patch)
Pitfall!	20,000 and above (patch)
Plaque Attack	35,000 or above (patch)
River Raid	15,000 and above (patch)
Robot Tank	4 squadrons—48 tanks (patch)

	5 squadrons—60 tanks 6 squadrons—72 tanks
Seaquest	50,000 and above (patch)
Skiing	Below 28.20 seconds (patch) —game 3
Sky Jinks	Below 37.0 seconds (patch) —game 1
Space Shuttle Pilot	4 or 5 dockings (patch)
Space Shuttle Commander	6 or more dockings (wings)
Spider Fighter	40,000 and above (patch)
Stampede	3,000 and above (patch)
StarMaster	Game 1: 3,800 and above (patch) Game 2: 5,700 and above (patch) Game 3: 7,600 and above (patch) Game 4: 9,000 and above (patch)
Tennis	Beat the computer (patch)—one set

Activision is adding to the list of game clubs all the time, so be sure to check the booklet enclosed in your new game cartridge box for new clubs.

Taking Pictures of Your Score

One thing you will need to know is how to take those all-important pictures of your television screen when you finally make the score that qualifies you for entry into the game club. Here's how.

First, you *don't* need a flash—the light from your TV will be enough. If you have a 35-mm camera, use film with ASA 64, set the lens for f-22, and expose for three to five seconds. Or, if you use film with ASA 100, select the widest lens opening and shoot at 1/30 of a second. With an Instamatic 126 or 110, insert a dead flash bar or bulb to open the lens wide, hold steady, and click.

If it sounds a little tricky, you can practice by taking a shot or two of something else on TV, having the film developed, and finding out how you did.

Special Consumer Services

Several game companies offer full-color magazines or newsletters containing information about their new products, new games, contests, high game scores, strategy tips for playing games, and lots more interesting information. I'm listing the ones I know about, but you may find addresses for more in your game instruction booklets.

ACTIVISIONS—a very informative quarterly (four times a year) newsletter, with a lot of emphasis on high game scores.

Activision Consumer Relations Department
Drawer No. 7287
Mountain View, California 94039

ATARI AGE—published every other month, with a subscription of one dollar per year.

The Atari Club
1700 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

COLECOVISION EXPERIENCE—published three times a year, with a membership fee of six dollars a year. You will receive a membership kit containing a membership card, an iron-on T-shirt transfer, a score sheet, a sheet of

stickers, and book covers. The membership will entitle you to take advantage of special offers on products, including games and accessories.

ColecoVision Video Club
P.O. Box 4025
Syosset, New York 11791

Coleco also has a toll-free number for consumer services. Call them at 1-800-842-1225.

ATARI AUTHORIZED SERVICE CENTERs are located throughout the country. These centers provide repairs and parts for Atari systems for both in-warranty and out-of-warranty repairs. Check your Yellow Pages for locations and phone numbers.

ODYSSEY CUSTOMER SERVICE LINE number is 1-800-257-2525 (in Tennessee call 1-800-447-4545).

games/computers/hobbies $6.95

THE VID KID'S BOOK OF HOME VIDEO GAMES

Rawson Stovall

How can you choose from all the home video games available today? How can you know which games you'll enjoy playing most? What game system to buy? THE VID KID'S BOOK OF HOME VIDEO GAMES will help you make the right selection.

In this book, Rawson Stovall, the twelve-year-old VID Kid, author of his own nationally syndicated column on video games, reviews over eighty of the best home video games. He rates them according to

- type (maze, combat, or educational)
- play
- graphics
- sound
- difficulty level
- what age level they're for

He also reviews the six game systems for which these games are designed:

- Atari 2600
- Atari 5200
- ColecoVision
- Intellivision
- Odyssey²
- Vectrex

Also included are chapters on how to have fun with video games, e.g., hosting a video game tournament, the secret messages in video games, the VID Kid Quiz, tips on special consumer services, alternatives to buying games, and game club requirements.

Rawson Stovall—the VID Kid—is the author of the nationally syndicated column "The Video Beat." He has appeared on "Good Morning America," "Hour Magazine," "PM Magazine," "That's Incredible," and "CBS Morning News" and has been featured in numerous magazines and newspapers throughout the country. He is in the sixth grade and lives in Abilene, Texas.

COVER DESIGN BY ROBERT AULICINO
Author Photo by Don Hutcheson.
Video game screens (clockwise):
Cosmic Ark™ (Imagic), Shark! Shark!™ (Mattel),
Buzz Bombers™ (Mattel), Lock 'n' Chase™ (Mattel).

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